

Disarmament
in British
Foreign Policy

Rolland A.
Chaput

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by

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TO
MARY L. BURR GIBSON
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P R E F A C E

UNDER the classical conception of war as the continuation of policy by the use of armed force, armaments, as the instruments of war, and, hence, of national policy, are an important element in diplomacy. Their limitation, therefore, involves an issue affecting vital interests, and negotiations to bring it about reveal all the difficulties inherent in a system of "Power Politics." In order to understand the attitude of any Government on the problem of reduction and limitation of armaments, it is necessary to know the broad lines of its foreign policy and those particular policies for the furtherance of which it fought in the past and would be ready to do so again. Seen in this light, the problems of disarmament appear to be, as indeed they are, attempts to arrive at or remain in a satisfactory diplomatic situation without having recourse to the now unprofitable and ineffective method of war.

In the following pages an attempt has been made to examine the attitude of the British Government on the limitation of naval, land, and air armaments and the resulting influence on foreign policy. The introduction contains a survey of the essential principles of British foreign policy and situates the limitation and reduction of armaments within the whole complex of that policy. Such a survey is indispensable to any estimate of the importance of disarmament proposals and the attitude of the British Government thereon. The main body of the book traces the attitude and policy of the British Government throughout the various negotiations for naval, military, and air disarmament. The conclusion summarizes the whole in answer to the question raised by the title, "What is the position of Great Britain on disarmament and what role does it play in the scheme of British foreign policy?"

In this study an attempt has been made to conform to the

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two fundamental requirements of objectivity. In the first place, the data considered were only those phenomena taking place in a time-space continuum which could be easily checked by independent critical observers. "What ought to be" has been purposely left out of consideration and conceptual relations have been, as far as possible, broken down in terms of actual behaviour. In the second place, judgments of value based upon preconceived notions of good have been, so far as possible, eliminated and only those judgments were retained which could be inferred directly from the data presented. The objection may be raised to such treatment that the book has thus become a mere compilation of facts lacking the spirit to make them live. I beg to submit, however, that it is the function of the reader to draw conclusions on the basis of his own norms. The aim of this study is to furnish him with a clear picture of the problems involved in disarmament, looked at from the point of view of foreign policy.

Treatment has been limited to the effectives and material of land, naval, and air armaments. Many problems which are now usually associated with disarmament have been left out of consideration. Trade in and manufacture of arms and ammunition raised problems of such a different order that they could not be considered in this study. Moreover, they play only a very minor part in the striking of the political equilibrium of which the reduction and limitation of armaments are an essential condition. The exchange of information, while of importance in disarmament, does not raise problems of particular significance in diplomacy, and it has been taken into consideration only when necessary to complete the picture. Similarly, the problems of control and of security have not been dealt with as such, but were brought in whenever necessary to make clear the breadth of the problems involved. They are inseparable from any dis-

Preface

armament convention, but they raise such complex questions as to be entirely outside the main theme of this book. The politics of other countries had to be considered in so far as necessary to explain British policies, but in no case has this been done with the intention of approving or disapproving of the particular policies involved.

Throughout this study the word "disarmament" has not been used to signify the complete abolition of armaments. "Disarmament" has been used in the wider significance given to it in popular and League of Nations discussions, as meaning "limitation and reduction of armaments." The widespread use of "disarmament" in this sense justifies similar usage here. "Conscription" has also been used in the popular meaning of the term to refer to universal compulsory military service. It has not been used in its real sense of compulsory military service with recruits picked by ballot and with the possibility of purchasing substitutes.

Grateful acknowledgments are extended to Professor Maurice Bourquin of the Post-Graduate School of International Studies and the University of Geneva, Belgian Representative on the Preparatory Disarmament Commission and at the Disarmament Conference, for ever-willing assistance in the course of this study and for invaluable advice drawn from his wide personal experience; and for thorough reading of the manuscript. Professor Paul Mantoux has also helped with friendly advice and has very kindly checked some information concerning the Conference of Paris. For this and his critical reading of the manuscript I extend to him my hearty thanks. I am very grateful to Professor Alfred E. Zimmern, to whose wisdom and judgment I am deeply indebted and from whom I have never failed to receive encouragement and inspiration in the task I had set myself. Many thanks are due to Professor William E. Rappard for valuable advice tendered

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GENEVA

October 1, 1934

INTRODUCTION

Peace: the Fundamental Aim of British Foreign Policy

INSTRUCTIONS drawn up by George Canning in 1824 for his cousin Stratford, British Ambassador at Madrid, began with the observation that "to preserve the peace of the world is the leading object of the policy of England." In his famous speech at West Calder, Mr. Gladstone stated that the aim of British foreign policy "ought to be to preserve to the nations of the world the blessing of peace." On October 24, 1898, Lord Salisbury wrote to Sir C. Scott, Ambassador to St. Petersburg, "There are, indeed, few nations, if any, which both on grounds of feeling and interest are more concerned in the maintenance of general peace than is Great Britain."¹ Mr. H. A. L. Fisher began a survey of Lloyd George's foreign policy by saying that "the paramount interest of Great Britain is, and has always been, the preservation of peace throughout the world."² Speaking at the Guildhall Banquet on November 10, 1924, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, as he then was, repeated this commonplace, "My Lord Mayor, the aim of every statesman in the British Empire is, and must ever be, to preserve peace."³ Mr. Ramsay MacDonald opened the Imperial Conference of 1930 with the statement that "in the sphere of foreign affairs the great objective is to secure and maintain world peace and uphold the influence of our Commonwealth of Nations in world affairs."⁴ A single dominant note is reiterated in these statements of British leaders of different periods and different parties: peace is the fundamental aim of British foreign policy.

Peace—the absence of war—is a state of equilibrium in which the existing legal order or practice is not changed by the use of armed force. Great Britain has always endeavoured to maintain

¹ *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, I, p. 221.

² *Foreign Affairs* (N.Y.), I, 69–84.

³ Chamberlain, Sir Austen, *Peace in Our Time*, p. 2.

⁴ Cmd. 3718 of 1930, p. 7.

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this state of equilibrium in order that she might profit from her world-wide commerce. This policy, however, has been applied only to countries where a stable Government administered a rule of law ensuring sufficient tranquillity and security to permit trading. Where no law of this kind existed, the peace policy of the British Government has been interpreted to warrant the imposition, by force if necessary, of the *Pax Britannica*, to ensure the maintenance of law and order and the utmost freedom of commerce. This policy gave to British commercial and financial enterprise the requisite freedom and security to develop new countries and bring to them the "benefits of civilization." What has been called the long era of peace in Europe during the nineteenth century, unbroken except for the Crimean War, resulted in the liberation of the British Army for thirty-two "Colonial Wars" between 1814 and the South African War of 1899-1902.¹ With the spread of imperial dominion, however, most of the "uncivilized" regions of the world came under control of national or imperial Governments. This movement so extended the rule of law that, in the second decade of the twentieth century, peace, as the cardinal aim of British foreign policy, has become world peace except "in certain outlying regions" where, it seems, the *Pax Britannica* has not yet been fully operative in enlightening backward peoples.

This policy of peace has been strengthened by circumstances arising out of the war. Great Britain entered the World War to ensure her security against invasion and protect her necessary sea-borne trade. The war, however, all but destroyed her security and commerce. German submarines preyed upon her sea-borne trade and decimated the shipping necessary to her continued existence. The possession of naval supremacy was not sufficient to put a complete stop to this menace although adequate methods of control were developed by the end of the war. German airships and aeroplanes brought war to the people of England for the first time in modern history and made them realize that the Channel was no longer a barrier between them and Europe. Without

¹ Fortescue, *The Empire and the Army*; — — —, *A History of the British Army*.

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invasion of England, the English civilian population could now be attacked, and there existed no completely effective method of prevention. Moreover, by the bombing and destruction of ports and harbours, shipping could be immobilized and starvation very quickly brought home. The dual threat to sea-borne trade from the submarine and the aeroplane and the direct threat to the British people from the air had rendered more imperative than ever the need for maintenance of peace to safeguard essential British interests.

The necessity for keeping peace as the corner-stone of foreign policy was increased by the domestic and imperial situation of Great Britain. The World War saw the rise of the Labour Party in England with its Socialist and pacifist tendencies. The Labour Party has insisted on a policy of peace as the first point in its international programme; but it did not hold the monopoly of pacifism in England. All parties were devoted to peace because the English people themselves turned against war in 1919 as they had done after every other war. The difference lay in this, that the Labour Party, as spokesman for the "masses," was more insistent upon peace and less willing to compromise in the clash of interests. It therefore, more than any other party, kept guard that peace might not be endangered through insistence upon secondary interests. All parties were devoted to peace and they differed little in real policy. The British people demanded peace, and no Government could continue in power in Great Britain which did not make it the guiding principle of foreign policy.

The Imperial position of Great Britain after the war also made a peace policy necessary. The war focused attention on the fact that the British Dominions had become completely self-governing entities, and the Imperial Conference of 1926 and the Statute of Westminster confirmed their independence from British control. They were now free members of the British Commonwealth of Nations on a footing of equality with Great Britain and, as such, shared in framing the common foreign policy. The different regional interests of the Dominions resulting from their different geographical situation made clearly impossible any policy other

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than that of maintaining peace. War might threaten disruption of the Commonwealth by opposing the regional interests of Dominions to the general welfare. It was, moreover, absolutely necessary for the Dominions bordering on the Pacific to maintain friendly relations with the United States; and a war in which Great Britain participated might involve the Empire in conflict with that country. A peace policy was therefore the only policy which could ensure the existence, security, and progress of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Lord Cecil, at the First Conference on British Commonwealth Relations at Toronto in 1933, summarized the general opinion of the Commission on Foreign Policy by saying:

“Peace is the most vital interest, and its pursuit and maintenance should be the greatest objective of the Commonwealth.”¹

Peace has thus become almost indispensable to the continued existence of Great Britain and the British Commonwealth of Nations. Because war with its modern developments threatens the British people with starvation and annihilation, because a new war would mean perhaps internal disruption and the breakdown of the Empire, peace has been more than ever the keynote of British foreign policy after the war. All the efforts of the Government in power have been directed toward peace. Economic and political intercourse is continually giving rise to new conflicts of interests among the European Powers. The equilibrium of peace has always, therefore, to be adjusted to new situations, some financial or political interest being sacrificed for some economic need or vice versa. For this reason English foreign policy has ever been empirical; when a situation has arisen which threatened peace, it has been dealt with and the equilibrium restored. This empiricism in method has led to unfavourable criticism by other nations which see in it indecision, uncertainty, vacillation, and even confusion. The record of British foreign policy, however, is not so much “a record of casual stumbling”²

¹ *British Commonwealth Relations*, p. 178.

² Firth, J. B., “England and the European System,” *Fortnightly Review*, 108, p. 17.

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as one of deliberate attempts in each case to keep the peace at the moment in the hope of thereby warding off violent changes in the existing legal order.¹

In spite of this purely empirical character of British foreign policy, there have emerged, in the course of modern history, certain methods of safeguarding essential British interests which have transcended all considerations of peace and become permanent bases of policy. If peace be the fundamental aim of British statesmen because the development and maintenance of British interests demand it, it ceases to be so when preservation of peace means jeopardizing the very existence of these interests. For this reason, the policy of peace has been subordinated to the measures necessary to preserve the most essential British interests: to safeguard the British Isles against attack or invasion and to maintain the trade necessary to the continued existence of England. "There are two ways," Sir Walter Raleigh said, "in which England may be afflicted. The one by invasion, being put to the defensive in which we shall cast lots for our own garments. The other by impeachment of our Trades by which Trades all Commonwealths flourish and are enriched."² This dual aspect

¹ Empiricism of method in English diplomacy has become a guiding principle of foreign policy. In a letter to General Grey on April 17, 1869, Gladstone summarized and approved Lord Clarendon's exposition of the principles of British foreign policy thus:

"That England should keep entire in her own hands the means of estimating her own obligations upon the various states of fact as they arise; that she should not foreclose and narrow her own liberty of choice by declarations made to other Powers, in their real or supposed interests, of which they would claim to be at least joint interpreters; that it is dangerous for her to assume alone an advanced and therefore an isolated position in regard to European controversies; that, come what may, it is better to promise too little than too much; that she should not encourage the weak by giving expectations of aid to resist the strong, but should rather seek to deter the strong by firm but moderate language from aggression on the weak; that she should seek to develop and mature the action of a common, or public, or European opinion as the best standing bulwark against wrong, but should beware of seeming to lay down the law of that opinion by her own authority, and thus running the risk of setting against her and against right and justice, that general sentiment which ought to be, and generally would be arrayed in their favour" (quoted in Morley, *Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, I, pp. 950-952).

² Quoted in Richmond, Sir H. W., *National Policy and Naval Strength and Other Essays*, p. 4.

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of the security of England arising out of her geographical position as an island proximate to a continent held by rival powers has dictated the need of England for sea-power and has given rise to the permanent bases of British foreign policy, the object of which has been to secure and maintain sea-power.

Britain's Need for Sea-Power to Assure Security and Trade Protection

Aristotle defined the first business of the politician or governor to be the insurance to the governed of supply and security. These two fundamental considerations have been inextricably mixed in English policy ever since the days of the Norman Conquest, both requiring preponderance in sea-power. Security depended upon a navy, but without trade no navy could exist, while the existence of a navy *ipso facto* stimulated trade. The early history of English trade bears out this interrelation. At the time of Edward III, a mercantile marine was looked upon as a liability, and not as a national asset, because it had to be protected from pirates and the King's enemies.¹ Later, with increasing consciousness of the necessity of sea-power to protect England from invasion, the Government gave attention both to the development of the navy and of trade. A first Navigation Act, passed in the reign of Richard II in 1382, made it compulsory for English subjects to export and import goods in English ships, having the majority of the crew British subjects, in order "to increase the Navy, which is now greatly diminished."² While the later Navigation Acts of 1651 and 1660 had for immediate object the development of shipping and industry at the expense of the Dutch, they helped to strengthen English sea-power upon which depended the security of England. Under the Navigation Acts, the mercantile marine approximately doubled between 1660 and 1688 while the

¹ Vide Cunningham, W., *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce during the Early and Middle Ages*; Egerton, Hugh E., *A Short History of British Colonial Policy*; Williamson, James A., *A Short History of British Expansions*; Rose, J. H., Newton, A. P., and Benians, E. A. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*.

² Egerton, *op. cit.*, p. 61; Williamson, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

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tonnage of the Royal Navy increased from 62,594 to 101,032 tons.¹ "The undoubted interest of England," said a writer in 1672, "is Trade, since it is that only which can make us either rich or safe; for without a powerful Navy we should be a prey to our neighbours and without Trade we should have neither seamen nor ships."²

English history affords numerous examples to show that the building up of sea-power entails the development of commerce and that the furtherance of commerce increases sea-power. The mercantile marine formed the first line reserve of the navy and commerce provided the wealth without which it was impossible to wage war successfully.³ It was, therefore, on grounds both of security and of commercial development that England, at the beginning of the pelagic phase of her history, subordinated the policy of peace to the extension of commerce and opposed the creation of trade monopolies such as those set up by the Bull of Pope Alexander VI.⁴ Under Spanish and Portuguese interpretations of *mare clausum* all commerce would have been denied to England, thereby relegating her permanently to the rank of small Power existing only on the sufferance of the large maritime Powers. The fight for commercial liberty, or for a share of the closed seas, was a fight for the existence of England against the exercise of a self-assumed exclusive right. On her ability effectively to challenge this right depended England's security and future development. As the power of a colonizing state was increased by a policy of monopolistic and exclusive commerce which

¹ Beer, *The Old Colonial System*, I, p. 13.

² Quoted in Richmond, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

³ Writing about the position of merchantmen at the time of James I, Corbett said, "To begin with, it must be borne in mind that first-class merchantmen still formed an integral and recognized part of the national navy. Sailing war-fleets in all countries were usually more than half made up of armed merchant ships. It had even been the policy of the British Government, as well as of others, to foster the production of such vessels as composed the little squadron by a tonnage bounty, with the express intention that they should constitute an auxiliary fleet. For centuries such vessels had occupied in the scheme of national defence a similar place to that which was held by county militia ashore. As yet the system had shown no signs of falling into disfavour, but rather the reverse" (*England in the Mediterranean*, 1603-1713, p. 59).

⁴ Cf. Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, pp. 114-138.

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provided her with the specie necessary to pay the costs of war and at the same time developed her shipping, it was not only profitable to British traders and freebooters to break down the commerce monopoly of predominant colonizing Powers, but it was essential to the security of England that the great sea-power resulting from such monopolized trade should not rest in the hands of rival Powers.

English policy toward colonies reflected the close connection between security and commerce and their dependence upon the maintenance of sea-power. Admiral Richmond pointed the relation well when he wrote: "Colonies in America and settlement in India were markets: trade and security were the great object to which they contributed: they were elements in sea-power."¹ The necessity for security coincided with the interests of traders and English policy safeguarded the one when it safeguarded the other. English relations with the Dutch after the Armada reflected the need of preponderant sea-power in order effectively to safeguard British vital interests. Sir Herbert Richmond writes:

"The English, well aware that their security from invasion depended upon sea-power, saw their neighbours whom they had, as they felt, saved from extinction at the hands of Spain creating a navy which might at any time be at the service of a military ally—France or Spain. This gave a sense of insecurity. Further, they saw these neighbours developing a vast trade, and in so doing excluding, by every possible means, English trade from the same area; and the more the Dutch expanded, the more numerous became their ships and seamen, and therefore the greater their sea-power and the greater English insecurity. Hence two nations, whose interests, religious, political and military, were closely bound together became bitterly hostile in consequence of oversea settlement and sea-power."²

¹ Richmond, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

² *Ibid.*, p. 322. Although the interests of traders and the needs of security reinforced each other at every turn, when a conflict between them arose, security dictated State policy, as the belated Treaty of Westminster of 1674 after the Second Dutch War and the redition of Louisbourg to the French in the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748 in exchange for Flanders which was to remain in Dutch hands. Many other examples of such bargains may be found where England has given up colonial territory of great commercial importance to safeguard her security in Europe.

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The development of trade resulting from the growing industrialization of Great Britain has only interwoven more closely considerations of security and commerce and emphasized their dependence on sea-power. Although merchant ships have not the value in war which they had before the advent of armour and modern artillery, they are still important as auxiliary cruisers and as training ships for sailors. Major-General Seely stated in the House of Commons on March 4, 1920, that the Mercantile Marine was responsible for the fact that Great Britain was able to maintain the blockade, thereby preventing the defeat of the British Navy.¹ Great Britain is now, more than ever before, dependent for her existence upon the continued flow of her sea-borne trade. All of her tea, coffee, cocoa, sugar, and rice, 50 per cent of her meat, 65 per cent of her cheese and butter, and 70 per cent of her cereals come from abroad. All her cotton, silk, copper, copper ore, hemp, raw jute, and nickel ore, 93 per cent of her wool, 98 per cent of her tin ore and zinc ore, 94 per cent of her lead, 33 per cent of her iron ore, and 96 per cent of her liquid fuels,² all necessary for her industry, are provided by external commerce. In view of this situation, considerations of the maintenance of commerce have become considerations of security. Ernest C. Fayle began his story of *Sea-Borne Trade* during the war with the following evaluation:

“Deprived of that trade, Great Britain could neither maintain her industries, nor equip her armies, nor feed her people. The maintenance of maritime communications was, in August 1914, a consideration every whit as vital as the denial of passage to an invading force.”³

More than ever, then, must British foreign policy link security and trade as the inseparable vital interests, a threat to which must inevitably result in the abandonment of the policy of peace, and assure them by the maintenance of preponderant sea-power.

¹ 126 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1602–1603.

² *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1926, p. 58.

³ *Sea-Borne Trade*, I, p. 1.

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Principles Essential to the Maintenance of Sea-Power

Strength is a relative term: the strength of one involves relative weakness of others. The positive aspect of being strong is to increase one's own strength, while the negative aspect is to prevent the increase of or to decrease the strength of others. The security of Great Britain demands the maintenance of relative strength at sea. This strength has been maintained by the development of effective naval forces. It has also been maintained by a negative policy tending to prevent other countries from developing strong sea-power in their turn. The first aspect of this negative policy has been to deny control of the Low Countries to any strong naval or military Power, because their geographical position on the Continent is particularly threatening to British security and the continued maintenance of naval superiority. The second aspect of the negative policy of preventing the growth of naval Powers has been the determination of Great Britain to maintain the balance of power in Europe by preventing any naval or military Power from becoming preponderant in European affairs. This second aspect is closely bound up with the first because, historically, all attempts at securing the hegemony of Europe have taken place on the battlefields of Flanders. It is also related to the maintenance of naval superiority because any attempt to dominate Europe would involve direct challenge to the naval strength of Great Britain through the building up of a navy larger than the British.

(1) Effective Naval Supremacy

The safeguarding of England and, later, of the British Isles against attack and invasion has been the primary consideration of British foreign policy ever since the days of the Norman Conquest. Situated on an island separated from the Continent only by a narrow strip of water, England had for centuries been the prey of marauding peoples which, on four different occasions, conquered the country and settled in it. Throughout this early history, the sea, instead of forming a barrier, served as an avenue

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to invasion. Invasion could be prevented only by the possession of a navy strong enough to patrol the seas. This need of a strong navy was not fully comprehended at once but was realized increasingly with the experience of centuries. Although, to provide against invasion, William I issued charters to the Cinque Ports, Hastings, Romney, Hythe, Dover, and Sandwich, which undertook to provide among them fifty-seven ships for fifteen days' service every year, the full meaning of sea-power was not brought home to the inhabitants of England until the centuries of war with France when, failing adequate protection, English ships were seized by pirates who even violated English territory, and trade to Flanders was intercepted by French ships. In spite of the victory of Sluys in 1340, the English so failed to take advantage of sea-power that disaster overcame the Earl of Pembroke at the hands of the Spaniards in 1372 and, as a result, England lost all but a coastal fringe of Aquitaine.

The first Navigation Act was passed at the time of Richard II to rebuild a greatly diminished navy. This method of securing sea-power was resorted to later, particularly after 1651, to help build up English commerce and indirectly the English Navy. In 1436-1437, the "Libel of English Policy" was published urging that "the true process of English policy is this. . . . Cherish merchandise, keep the Admiralty, that we be masters of the Narrow Seas." The author advocated a strong navy and a strong mercantile marine to protect England and bring her prosperity.

"Kepe then the sea that is the wall of England:
And then is England kept by Goddes Hande."¹

And so it was that, gradually through the centuries until the last days of the Tudors, the necessity of maintaining supremacy of the seas by a strong navy came to be more and more consciously accepted as the only means of securing English territory against invasion. As Sir Walter Raleigh put it, "Invaded or impeached

¹ *De Politia Conservativa Maris*, better known as "The Libel of English Policy" from its general introduction, first printed by Hakluyt and generally attributed to Adam de Moleyns, Bishop of Chichester (*vide* Traill, H. D. (ed.), *Social England*, II, pp. 345-347; Williamson, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29).

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we cannot be except by sea." The strong feeling of the Commons against a standing army reinforced the belief in sea-power and the official policy laid down in 1618 called for a navy strong enough "with private ships without foreign aid to encounter any Prince's sea forces."¹

Although the principle was now definitely established that England required a navy stronger than that of any other prince to secure herself against invasion and protect her trade, the most advantageous use of this naval supremacy was not clearly defined. In local or colonial wars this question did not arise, as the most economical use of sea-power was self-evident. In general European wars—wars in which the security of England was at stake—conflicts of opinion have persistently arisen as to whether the main effort of England should be military and concentrated in the principal theatre of war, or whether it should be maritime, her military forces being employed only where their use would be decisive and her finance supporting her allies. In the opinion of Elizabethan writers, England's advantage lay in the full use of maritime strength. This view is stated with acumen by Francis Bacon. "This much is certain; he that commands the sea is at great liberty and may take as much or as little of war as he will, whereas those that be strongest by land are many times nevertheless in great straits."² At the beginning of the second Hundred Years' War, however, England, under the leadership of William III and of Marlborough, turned to the policy of fighting as a land power. Although she had a supremacy at sea which did prevent actual invasion, this advantage was not fully exploited. Admiral Richmond summarizes the result:

"So it came about that those eighteen years of war . . . saw no increase in the Empire comparable with that of later times; but witnessed, on the contrary, British colonies being attacked and ravaged, British trade being held up, and British merchant fleets lost; and at the end, an exhausted Britain."³

¹ Report of a Commission appointed by James I to investigate the state of the Navy. Quoted in Corbett, *op. cit.*, I, p. 70.

² Bacon, Francis, *The Moral and Historical Works of Francis Bacon*, p. 89.

³ Richmond *op. cit.*, p. 330. Cf. Rose, J. Holland, "Sea Power and Expansion," *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, I, pp. 507-537.

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During the Napoleonic Wars Britain turned again to dependence chiefly upon her navy and used her army only for limited attack in fields where it could be most effective, as, for instance, in Spain. "If any one," said Wellington in 1813, "wishes to know the history of this war, I will tell him it is our maritime superiority gives me the power of maintaining my army while the enemy is unable to do so." The effectiveness of this policy he demonstrated in his famous despatch to Lord Bathurst of December 21, 1813.

"By having kept in the field about 30,000 men in the Peninsula, the British Government have now for five years given employment to 200,000 French troops of the best Napoleon had."¹

This policy was not followed in the war of 1914-1918 where Great Britain became a leading military Power and the result was, once again, an exhausted Britain.² Comparing the position of Britain after the wars with the Empire and the war of 1914-1918, Sir James Headlam-Morley writes:

"First we must note that in the war [with the Empire] itself our successes had been more striking and attained with less relative loss; the strain on the country notwithstanding the greater length of the war, had been less severe. This was ultimately due to the fact that we had reserved our efforts much more for naval warfare and had not committed ourselves to taking part in the main struggle on the continent with an Army equal in size to that of the Continental Powers."³

The British strategy which has proved historically most successful requires a naval force large enough to maintain command of the sea, and of such a nature as to enable it to give battle to any opposing force. In addition to establishing command, the naval force must use that command so as to close the sea to enemy commerce, protect British commerce against a *guerre de course*, and support the army in the operations it may undertake. Influenced by these needs, the tendency of British foreign policy

¹ Gurwood, Colonel J., *The Despatches of Field-Marshal the Duke of Wellington*, VII, p. 214.

² *Vide* Liddell Hart, Captain B. H., *The British Way in Warfare*, pp. 13-41.

³ Headlam-Morley, *Studies in Diplomatic History*, p. 149.

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has been to insist upon the maintenance of the supremacy of British sea-power in her own and European waters. This has been accompanied by the inseparable corollary that there must be freedom to use this supremacy in any way most efficient to ensure British security. This explains persistent British opposition to the "Freedom of the Seas" and the choice made by Great Britain, on more than one occasion, to go to war rather than limit the effectiveness of her sea-power and thereby reduce her security. The same consideration dictated, in the disarmament discussions after the war, the actual limitations and the methods of limitation of armaments which Great Britain could accept.

In spite of the apparent threat to surface ships from torpedo-craft, the British Government continued, after the war, to rest its faith in effective sea-power as the best means of safeguarding security. It reaffirmed the traditional British policy of maintaining a navy as powerful as any that might oppose it. The desperate financial situation and the strong popular emotional current in favour of peace and disarmament, however, prevented this policy being carried out actively through armaments building. The Government, therefore, substituted diplomatic negotiations for armaments competition and attempted to maintain maritime supremacy intact by means of international conventions limiting naval armaments to an agreed ratio. Throughout the negotiation of these conventions, the Government made it clear that Britain's geographical position necessitated predominant effective sea-power and that it could countenance no agreement which did not explicitly recognize this fact. The first principle emerging from British history and upon which foreign policy has repeatedly refused to compromise is, therefore, the necessity for the maintenance of a superior and unhampered sea-power as the best and only guarantee of British security.

(2) The Low Countries in Friendly Hands

As the island position of Great Britain established the first permanent basis of her foreign policy, so also it was the geographical

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factor which determined the second permanent basis, the requirement that the Low Countries should not be controlled by a strong military or naval Power. Whereas the south coast of England is high, the cliffs making landing very difficult and the deep water permitting ships to lie close to the land to intercept invading forces, the east coast is low and sloping. Landing on the east was therefore comparatively easy and could not be prevented by ships lying close to the shore. The Thames, the main artery of English trade, also facilitated invasion, as De Ruyter's burning of Chatham demonstrated. The coast of the Low Countries was near enough to permit an expedition to reach England in one day with a favourable wind, and this wind would prevent the despatch of a squadron to intercept the invader. To meet this threat, England had need of a port on the Continent from which a fleet could sail to intercept invasion. Dunkirk, Calais, and Flushing and Brill, which latter were called the "Keyes to England," alternately filled this need.¹ The importance of this strategic position of the coast of the Low Countries was increased by the commercial importance of the shipping which concentrated at the mouths of the Scheldt, the Meuse, and the Rhine. It was, therefore, of prime importance to England that no strong military or naval Power should control the ports of the Low Countries where a strong armada could be gathered to strike at the "heart of England." The permanent threat of invasion and the menace to British naval supremacy resulting from such control was so vital that Great Britain went to war repeatedly to remove it.

Throughout mediaeval times English policy has opposed all extension of French territory in Flanders, and, after the union of Burgundy and Spain, supported the movement for the independence of the Netherlands. Walsingham, in March 1585, urged Queen Elizabeth to adhere to the traditional English policy of opposing the subjection of the Dutch and Flemish coasts by any great conquering Power. Immediately after Holland received her

¹ Even the defeat of the First Spanish Armada in 1588 did not mitigate the fear of invasion in Kent after Parma's army had captured Calais in April 1596. During the Napoleonic War, the people on the East Coast kept their coaches ready for flight into the interior at the first approach of the French.

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independence from Spain in 1608 England entered into a guarantee treaty with her, pledging military support in case of attack. This policy was continued in the various Barrier Treaties to prevent France from obtaining control of the Low Countries. A Frenchman who visited England in 1677 reported to his Government that, "to use their own language, the members of the House of Commons would sell their shirts in order to prevent France conquering the Low Countries."¹ In 1748 Great Britain sacrificed Cape Breton, with all its possibilities for colonial expansion and commerce and the danger it presented to the British colonies, in order to prevent France acquiring the maritime benefits and the increased shipping which would have resulted from her occupation of Antwerp and the Scheldt. This same policy led England to war with revolutionary France, and, more than a century later, with Imperial Germany.

Although the development of steam vessels changed the original strategic "offensiveness" of the Low Countries from the British point of view, the need for the preservation of the Low Countries in friendly hands is all the greater since the war. The deltas of the Scheldt, the Meuse, and the Rhine form excellent emplacements for bases from which submarines can prey on British commerce. To this danger is added that of long-distance bombing by heavy artillery and by aircraft. Mr. Baldwin said in the House of Commons on July 30, 1934, "Let us never forget this—since the day of the air the old frontiers are gone. When you think of the defence of England, you no longer think of the chalk cliffs of Dover, you think of the Rhine."² Recognizing the need for safeguarding the existing political frontiers of the Low Countries, the British Government under Lloyd George was prepared to guarantee the Rhenish frontier of France and Belgium against unprovoked attack by Germany. Later, in the Locarno Treaties, the British Government, jointly with Italy, guaranteed the Rhenish

¹ Quoted in Headlam-Morley, *op. cit.*, p. 158. *Vide ibid.*, pp. 156-171; Renier, G. J., *Great Britain and the Establishment of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 1813-1815*; van der Linder, Herman, and Hamelius, Paul, *Anglo-Belgian Relations, Past and Present*.

² *The Times*, July 31, 1934.

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frontier of Germany, France, and Belgium against aggression, pledging armed support to the attacked country, much after the fashion of the old Barrier Treaties. In this way the British Government reasserted its determination to go to war to prevent the Low Countries falling into the hands of a preponderant military Power. Sir Austen Chamberlain wrote in 1931:

"The development of aeronautics has further impaired our insular security and has given fresh force to the secular principle of British policy that the independence of the Low Countries is a British interest, that their frontiers are in fact our frontiers, their independence the condition of our independence, their safety inseparable from our own. It was to ensure the independence of the Low Countries that we fought Spain in the sixteenth century, that we fought Napoleon in the nineteenth, and that we fought Germany in the twentieth. Here, at any rate, we find a permanent basis of British policy, recognized and re-affirmed by the guarantee we have given in the Treaty of Locarno to the frontiers of Germany [and her neighbours on the West]."¹

(3) *The Balance of Power in Europe*

Closely linked with the policy of denying to a preponderant military or naval Power access to the ports of the Low Countries is the balance of power, "the guiding principle of English, and subsequently, of British foreign policy."² Like the policy with regard to the Low Countries, the balance of power was based on the desire to increase and maintain British security at sea through diplomatic means. This was accomplished by lightening the burden of the British Navy through alliances and preventing an increase in the maritime strength of rivals. The ambitions

¹ Chamberlain, Sir Austen, "Permanent Bases of British Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* (N.Y.), 9, pp. 538-539. Presiding at the inaugural lecture of Dr. C. K. Webster at the London School of Economics, Sir Austen remarked that he had read Dr. Webster's book on Castlereagh. "I had recently become Foreign Secretary and was engaged in the early negotiations which ultimately led to the Treaty of Locarno, and I found myself unconsciously adapting to the circumstances of the twentieth century the policy which Castlereagh had pursued a century before" (*The Times*, March 9, 1933).

² Ward and Temperley (ed.), *The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, I, p. 6.

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of the Hapsburg and the Bourbon princes invariably led them to the occupation of the rich country of Flanders. In addition to this direct threat to English security, attempts to gain hegemony in Europe, involving as they did control of commerce, and hence real increase in sea-power, seriously threatened English naval strength indispensable to her security. This dual menace to the safety of England led her, early, to adopt the policy of holding a balance between the two leading European Powers, Spain and France, or Austria and France. By allying herself, now with one side, now with the other, England was able to keep the coasts of Flanders in friendly hands and prevent the concentration of military enterprise against English sea-power and the invasion of her island.

In his Essay "On Empire," Francis Bacon examined what should be the relation of the King with his neighbours.

"First, for their neighbours, there can no general rule be given (the occasions are so variable), save one which ever holdeth; which is, that princes do keep due sentinel, that none of their neighbours do overgrow so (by increase of territory, by embracing of trade, by approaches, or the like), as they become more able to annoy them than they were; . . . During the triumvirate of kings, King Henry the Eighth of England, Francis the First, King of France, and Charles the Fifth, Emperor, there was such a watch kept that none of these three could win a palm of ground, but the other two would straightways balance it, either by confederation, or if need were, by a war."¹

The inevitable sequel to the failure to follow such a policy and to the establishment of a military paramountcy on the Continent would have been the conquest of England. It was with this in mind that Queen Elizabeth said: "Whensoever the last day of the Kingdom of France cometh, it will undoubtedly be the eve of the destruction of England."² By alliance with and subsidy to the weaker side of the balance, England obliged the Continental countries to concentrate their attention on the maintenance of opposing armies, leaving herself mistress of the seas and arbiter

¹ Bacon, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-55.

² Richmond, *op. cit.*, p. 79, quoting Raleigh, *English Sea Voyages in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 70.

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of the destinies of Europe.¹ The Duke of Newcastle put the whole doctrine of the balance of power in a nutshell when he said:

“France will undo us at sea when they have nothing to fear by land. I have always maintained that our marine should protect our alliances on the continent; and they, by diverting the expense of France, enable us to maintain our superiority at sea.”²

After the Napoleonic War, the system of balance of power developed into the “Concert of Europe.” The Concert of Europe was based on the principle that every Great Power was concerned with the maintenance of peace and that any changes in the existing legal order must receive the approval of all.³ The system of balance of power had at first concerned only three Great Powers. When Russia and Prussia loomed larger in the field of European diplomacy, the balance of power was widened to take them into the equilibrium. The institution of the Concert of Europe in 1814 was merely the application of the principle of equilibrium to the whole of Europe with the understanding that changes in the existing legal order had to be sanctioned by all Great Powers in order that the balance among them might not be upset. This system of equilibrium, while maintaining peace, worked to the advantage of Great Britain, who, until the rise of German sea-power, remained undisputed mistress of the seas, secure in her island and free to develop and consolidate her imperial domain.

¹ “Great Britain’s political object throughout the wars of the eighteenth century was the maintenance of her naval power and trade. Her strategical problem, then, was how best to effect this purpose when in conflict with an enemy already formidable at sea, and capable of becoming more so by expansion through conquest, and overwhelmingly strong on land. The right solution of the problem, if this statement is correct, so far as British policy could effect it, was to ensure that the enemy’s power on land should not be increased, and by obliging him to use up his resources on land during the war, prevent him from increasing his strength at sea; that is to say, Great Britain’s policy was to join or to form coalitions. Her land forces, therefore, should have been employed to curtail the naval power and trade of the enemy, prevent its expansion, and increase our own, which means that the maintenance of sea-power was a primary function of the Army” (Bird, Major-General Sir W. D., “British Land Strategy in Four Great Wars, 1702–1802,” *Army Quarterly*, 22, p. 86).

² Quoted in Richmond, *op. cit.*, pp. 18–19.

³ Mowat, *The Concert of Europe*; Dupuis, *Le principe d’équilibre et le concert européen*.

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The foundation of the League of Nations in 1919 provided the machinery by which traditional British policy could best find expression. Based on the same fundamental conception as the original balance of power system and the Concert of Europe—that a breach of peace is of prime importance to all nations because it threatens their security—the League of Nations attempts to gather such preponderance of force against the breaker of peace as to ensure the maintenance of the equilibrium.¹ In the League, British policy has followed traditional lines. The Government has opposed every attempt to use the League to maintain the *status quo* of the Peace Treaties against all change; it has sought to bring German influence to bear once more in deciding European policy; it has attempted to harmonize the interests of all Powers to prevent their falling into opposed camps; it has held its power in reserve in order that, if this division should occur, Britain could swing the balance against the Powers seeking to obtain hegemony in Europe. Gladstone, in the nineteenth century, had stated one aim of British policy to be “to keep the Powers in union together” for “common action is fatal to selfish aims.”

¹ This system has been called “community of power” as opposed to the limited concept of “balance of power” as an equilibrium between two evenly matched groups of Powers. The system of balance of power, however, was fundamentally the same as that of the League of Nations. Two evenly matched States were kept from going to war with each other by the threat of having a third State join the enemy, thereby ensuring a preponderance of force against the country seeking hegemony. The limited concept of “balance of power” arose with special reference to the immediate pre-war situation where the third Power—England—had already joined one side to insure the required preponderance against the hegemony-seeking Powers. The same situation could arise in the League of Nations. The dissatisfied nations are prevented from resorting to force to justify their claims by the knowledge that all other nations are united against such use of force. If, however, the dissatisfied Powers should feel themselves strong enough to seek to overthrow the equilibrium by force, then, as in 1914, war would arise from the fact that the balance of power has, or is thought to have, swung in favour of the dissatisfied Powers. The antithesis between the League of Nations system and “balance of power” is based on too limited a conception of the system of balancing power and on a mystical view of “collectivity” as separate and distinct from and outside of the individual States. The realistic view is, of course, limited by existing conditions. Should, at any time, the difference between “satisfied” and “dissatisfied” Powers disappear, the system of “community of power” would assume its original meaning of co-operative society where justice rules, as opposed to the antagonistic and competing society of the “balance of power” where expediency ruled.

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Sir Austen Chamberlain, in the twentieth century, defined the British League policy on the same principle:

“Great Britain, indeed, now takes the League as the foundation of her foreign policy and finds in the development of the League’s influence the best guarantee of peace and consequently the best security for British interests. Her role at Geneva, as interpreted by successive Governments, is, whilst remaining faithful to old friendships, to seek a reconciliation with former enemies, to act as a link between the Great Powers and to help where she can to bring them together—as France and Germany at Locarno, and, more recently, Italy and France in the naval conversations at Rome and Paris. Above all, it is the endeavour of British statesmen to prevent Europe falling back into two hostile camps.”¹

In the League of Nations, therefore, the British Government has followed its traditional policy of upholding the balance of power in Europe, thus maintaining it as a permanent basis of its foreign policy.

Scope of British Foreign Policy

The scope of British foreign policy has not been wholly limited to the maintenance of its three permanent principles. If it had been so limited, there would have existed no possibility for the interplay of interests in diplomatic adjustments in the equilibrium of peace. Mixed with requirements of security were commercial and financial considerations which often influenced policy as much as more fundamental interests. The policy regarding Egypt was prompted by strategical factors and, also, by the desire to secure a supply of cotton and protect English bondholders. But, as in all cases where mixed motives were evident, the strategic dominated. As Sir Austen Chamberlain remarked, “The fact that Egypt commands in the Suez Canal the main artery of communication between England on the one hand and India and Australia on the other, is what took us to Egypt and keeps us there.”² In the development of other parts of Africa, policy was dictated by “interests,” which, clashing with the interests of other countries,

¹ Chamberlain, *op. cit.*, pp. 541–542.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 542–543.

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required support and protection. In an increasingly protectionist world, free markets were sought by industrialists with exportable surpluses, and these were found in the undeveloped regions of the world. Competition led to clashes of interests and to the political acquisition of dominion, in order to secure the new markets against foreign competition. To the search for markets was added the desire to invest surplus capital and to secure a supply of certain vital raw materials such as cotton, rubber, and oil.

The social forces influencing the scope of British foreign policy were no less powerful than the economic considerations. For decades in English history the religious ideal of placing England at the head of the Protestant States to carry the banner of religious liberty activated foreign policy, and the anti-slavery movement dominated British diplomacy at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. As Parliament exercised an increasingly profound influence on policy, its tradition could not be ignored, and the principle was developed that, as Gladstone later put it, "the foreign policy of England should always be inspired by the love of freedom." The movement for the abolition of slavery, pacifism, and the agitation for arbitral settlement of international disputes and for the limitation of armaments formed so many considerations now hindering, now helping, British policy toward other nations. Social forces strengthened or opposed economic and financial interests, and the result was an empirical foreign policy along the lines of most immediate expediency, but immutably confined by the fundamental considerations of British security.

The social and economic interests of Great Britain were counter-balanced by similar interests of the other Great Powers and by the interests of small Powers, and peace was kept by bargaining and exchanges of concessions. "For what we call foreign policy," writes Sir James Headlam-Morley, "is no simple story; it is the outcome of interaction and compromise between many different and competing interests and motives." He continues:

"The maintenance and defence of these interests provided in each case a new motive of policy, but the real problem arises always from the very

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number and variety of the interests to be defended, the developments to be furthered, and the objectives to be pursued. Like all other countries, England has but a limited amount of power, wealth, public credit, and political influence, and success requires a careful economy of resources. Just because the interests of this country are world-wide, just because there is no continent in which it has not political power and fields of economic enterprise, it is more than any other country exposed to the danger of pursuing conflicting aims and arousing political opposition, and, for this reason, objects which are desirable in themselves cannot all be attained at the same time; there must often be a sacrifice of material advantages, even a withdrawal from spheres of authority where we have established ourselves.”¹

Because the vital interests of Great Britain demand peace, the aim of British foreign policy has been to maintain peace, sacrificing social, political, and economic considerations to that end so long as vital interests were not threatened.

As an island situated near enough to a continent to be profoundly influenced by its history, England has had to depend upon the isolating qualities of sea-power to protect her from attack and invasion. The maintenance of sea-power has been so linked up with commercial developments that supremacy at sea has involved supremacy in sea-borne trade. The security of England to-day still conserves this close connection between security against invasion and the protection of commerce, the safeguarding of both calling for supreme maritime strength. This maritime strength has been attained by the maintenance of effective naval supremacy, by denying to a strong military and naval Power access to the coast of the Low Countries and by the preservation of a balance of power or equilibrium among the European Great Powers. These three means of securing England and her trade form the irreducible *minima postulata* of her foreign policy. Peace is kept by concessions, sacrificing less important interests in order to preserve more important ones. On the means of safeguarding her security, however, England has not compromised, but has abandoned peace and resorted to armed force when necessary to protect herself. In all discussions on the

¹ Headlam-Morley, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.

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reduction and limitation of armaments, not only has the British Government never been willing seriously to impair its maritime supremacy, but it has even faced the breakdown of discussions in order to preserve it.

The Function of Armaments in British Policy

The naval predominance which was so essential to British security and the maintenance of which formed one of the permanent bases of foreign policy constituted an invaluable asset in the conduct of foreign affairs. The ultimate sanction of policy is force, and the more effective the force, the less often sanctions will have to be applied and the more successful will be the policy. Corbett remarked that "beside being a fighting machine, a powerful navy is also a powerful diplomatic asset."¹ English diplomatic history is full of examples of the importance of naval pressure in carrying out diplomatic negotiations and in preventing war. When Digby on his mission for the restoration of the Palatinate was proceeding to Madrid in 1621, he wrote:

"I must earnestly recommend the continuing abroad yet for some small time of Sir Robert Mansell's fleet upon the coast of Spain, which in case his Majesty should be ill-used, will prove the best argument he can use for the restitution of the Palatinate."²

The Barbary Pirates provided the excuse for many a naval expedition to the Mediterranean to influence the course of diplomatic negotiations; the despatch of Blake with a squadron to the Mediterranean under this pretext ensured the recognition of the Protector by Spain. The same fleet played an important role in the negotiations with Mazarin.

English armed forces, particularly the navy, have proved important considerations in diplomatic bargainings for the maintenance of peace. They have enabled English diplomats to assume a leading role in the councils of Europe, and, as weapons ensuring successful diplomacy, have contributed greatly to the prestige of England. The "alliance value" of England which enabled her

¹ Corbett, *op. cit.*, I, p. 3.

² Quoted *ibid.*, I, p. 114.

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to maintain the balance of power depended largely upon the supremacy of the English Navy. The prestige and diplomatic value of armaments is well illustrated in the negotiations for the leasing of Weihai Wei. The British Government was concerned over the Russian occupation of Port Arthur because it was "likely to have political consequences at Peking of great international importance."¹ It, therefore, "thought [it] necessary, in consequence of the action of Russia, to take possession of some port in the Gulf of Pechili itself in order to restore our influence at Peking, which had been injured by the Russian advance in Manchuria."² Weihai Wei was acquired for this purpose and the British Navy played an important role in the negotiation of the lease. In a telegram to Lord Salisbury, on March 3, 1898, the British Minister at Peking described the pressure put on China by the presence of the British Squadron.

"I saw Yâmen to-day and gave them till Saturday for final answer, telling them that if not affirmative matter would be placed in Admiral's hands."³

Even after the war, armaments remained the ultimate pressure at the disposal of the Government to ensure that policies which might jeopardize Britain's security should not be carried out.

Disarmament In the Scheme of British Foreign Policy

In spite of the large role played by the armed forces of the Crown in the conduct of British foreign policy, British public opinion has always clamoured for reduction in the burden of armaments. Attention has usually centred on the army. The navy, however, has also been affected by the reduction in defence expenditures and the history of English naval forces is one of continual fluctuation in size and efficiency. After every war, there

¹ The Marquess of Salisbury to Sir N. O'Connor, March 28, 1898. *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, I, pp. 27-29.

² Sir F. Lascelles to the Marquess of Salisbury, May 26, 1898. *Ibid.*, I, pp. 34-35.

³ Sir C. MacDonald to the Marquess of Salisbury, March 31, 1898. *Ibid.*, I, p. 29.

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has been a retrenchment in expenditure which seriously affected the fighting services. Thus, Fortescue writes of the army in 1647:

"... there was a general cry throughout the land for peace. The country was exhausted; the finance of the Parliament was in helpless disorder; and the people groaned under the enormous expense of the war. Obviously the most natural item for retrenchment was the Army; its work was done, and there was no further reason for its existence; it should therefore be disbanded or at any rate greatly reduced."¹

Similarly, in spite of the unstable and unsatisfactory character of the Peace of Amiens in 1802, the British Army was reduced from 250,000 to 127,000 men. After the Napoleonic War, the policy was again to decrease British armaments to "the lowest scale compatible with the ordinary duties incident to the British possessions."² The Duke of Wellington complained that the only way in which he could keep any soldiers at all was by hiding them in Ireland.

After the war of 1914-1918 public opinion more strongly than ever demanded immediate and drastic cuts in armament expenditures. Pacifists, reacting against the ruinous naval competition of pre-war days and the wholesale carnage of modern warfare, agitated for the disarmament of England as an assurance against the repetition of war experiences. Liberal thought, led by Lord Grey of Fallodon, attributed to armaments competition a good share of the blame for the war and joined the pacifists in demanding that England should lead in disarmament. In view of economic and social pressure, the British Government assumed the lead in disarmament and seriously reduced its armed forces. By 1931, however, it had become convinced that it had gone as far as it could on the road to unilateral disarmament. Other nations had not followed the example of Britain by comparable reduction of their armaments. The only result of unilateral disarmament had been a voluntary surrender of British diplomatic strength and a

¹ Fortescue, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 229-230.

² Headlam-Morley, *op. cit.*, p. 257. *The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, II, p. 18; Webster, "Disarmament Proposals in 1816," *Contemporary Review*, 122, pp. 621-628.

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serious decrease in the influence of Great Britain in maintaining peace.

While unilateral disarmament had always been a domestic issue forming one of the factors with which British Governments had to reckon in formulating their policy, the proposals of Czar Alexander I in 1816 had raised the issue of disarmament to the level of international relations. This had an important bearing on foreign policy because international disarmament standardizes the relative diplomatic power of the countries involved and prevents the use of armaments competition to upset the political equilibrium. From the first, the British Government favoured an international reduction of armaments. Castlereagh wrote to Lord Stewart, "Upon the policy of a mutual and relative reduction of force, all are agreed."¹ The difficulties of attaining this were made clear in the memorandum of the Prince Regent to Alexander in May 1816, in which the British Government advocated collateral disarmament of each State in accordance with its necessities and full publicity regarding the actions taken.² On various occasions British Ministers have suggested proportionate reductions in the armaments of each country, leaving them their relative strength but appreciably reducing their burden. After the South African War there was much agitation in England in favour of reduction of armaments, and this continued after the war of 1914-1918. The desire to reduce armaments played its part in diplomacy in 1870, 1899, 1907, and in the many Anglo-German negotiations on naval armaments before the war.

The movement for unilateral reduction of British armaments after the war was closely associated with and formed the main strength of the wider movement for international reduction and limitation of armaments. An essential part of the programme of the League of Nations as an organization to prevent the modification of the existing legal order by force lay in "the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national security and the enforcement by common action of international

¹ July 9, 1816. Webster, *op. cit.*, p. 625.

² *Ibid.*, p. 624; Headlam-Morley, *op. cit.*, pp. 255-258.

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obligations." All political parties in Great Britain, by adopting the League of Nations as a necessary part of their peace programme, thereby made the international reduction and limitation of armaments an inseparable part of their foreign policy. It was upon this issue, more than upon any other, that the "will to peace" of post-war Britain manifested its strength. Disarmament and peace came to be regarded as synonymous, so that Mr. MacDonald, making a statement in the House of Commons on the policy of his Government, said on February 12, 1924, that "the final aim of the Foreign Secretary must be to come to an arrangement upon armaments,"¹ and Mr. Henderson, on February 9, 1931, labelled disarmament "the greatest of moral issues which our generation has to face."² The ratification of an international convention for the reduction and limitation of armaments became, as the abolition of slavery had become a century before, the outstanding popular issue of British foreign policy.

The popular movement in favour of international disarmament has compelled the British Government to seek, more actively than it might otherwise have done, to bring about an international convention for the reduction and limitation of armaments. Foreign Governments took advantage of the popular pressure behind the British Government to extract support of some favourite policy in exchange for agreement on disarmament. They considered disarmament a subsidiary way of securing peace, and, not a general interest, but an exclusive British preoccupation.³ They used it as a means either to crystallize the existing equilibrium against all changes, by armed force or otherwise, or else to increase their relative diplomatic strength and thereby place themselves in better position to change the political equilibrium.

¹ 169 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 772.

² *The Times*, February 10, 1931.

³ They adopted a similar attitude toward British efforts to abolish slavery at the Congress of Vienna. Castlereagh wrote to Liverpool from Vienna on October 25, 1814, "It is impossible to persuade foreign nations that this sentiment is unmixed with views of colonial policy, and their Cabinets, who can better estimate the real and virtuous motives which guide us on this question, see in the very impatience of the nation a powerful instrument through which they expect to force, at a convenient moment, the British Government upon some favourite object of policy" (Webster, C. K., *British Diplomacy, 1813-1815*, p. 215).

Introduction

In the light of this attitude, the British Government combined its policy of maintaining the balance of power with its policy for international disarmament and endeavoured to unify Europe in a political settlement of which international disarmament would be an essential part ensuring it against overthrow by armed force. As modern warfare could be used to further national interest only in the very last resort, the British Government relied more upon international disarmament as a means of forwarding its peace policy and safeguarding its vital interests. International reduction and limitation of armaments, therefore, far from modifying the essential principles of British policy, has on the contrary helped British diplomacy in maintaining them intact.

DISARMAMENT IN BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

CHAPTER I

BRITISH ATTITUDE ON NAVAL DISARMAMENT

SINCE Clausewitz, war has been defined as the continuation of policy by the exertion of actual physical violence.¹ When ordinary diplomatic intercourse and milder and more indirect forms of compulsion have failed to bring about a desired political end, war is resorted to in order to bring the unwilling party to submission. While the means of applying mild or indirect constraint are various, armaments are the sole means by which a nation can coerce other nations by direct physical violence. The effectiveness of these armaments and their contribution to the furtherance of national policy are measured in terms of their potential ability to perform their functions. Their greatest contribution to diplomatic bargaining is made when this effectiveness is so patent as to enable the nation to enforce its will and pursue its policy without having recourse to the use of force; when other nations knowing its strength in arms hesitate to provoke physical conflict. This political value of armaments has led nations to compete in military forces and equipment in attempts to improve their relative diplomatic position and obtain more "Power" to support national policy. In this competition armaments have been balanced against each other in the general political equilibrium, and a change in the armaments of one nation has involved a change in the diplomatic position of all the others. Viewed in

¹ Cf. Angell, Sir Norman, etc., *What Would be the Character of a New War?* Corbett, Sir Julian S., *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*; Custance, Admiral Sir Reginald, *A Study of War*; Fuller, Col. J. F. C., *The Reformation of War*; — — —, *The Dragon's Teeth*; Richmond, Admiral Sir Herbert W., *National Policy and Naval Strength and Other Essays*; — — —, "Sea Warfare" in Aston, Sir George, *The Study of War*.

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the light of their purely political or diplomatic role, therefore, armaments cannot be differentiated among themselves according to the elements in which they operate, but must be considered as a whole. This has always been done when attempts have been made to balance the strength of groups of States and crystallize the political *status quo*.

This essential oneness of armaments as political weapons has not been observed in their actual organization. Due to different technical problems of training, of personnel, and material, it has been necessary to differentiate among armaments according to the element in which they evolve: *i.e.* land, naval, and air armaments. This differentiation necessarily entails separate and distinct consideration of the technical problems involved in the reduction and limitation of armaments, although all the fighting services are interrelated in their political influence. The study of the problems of the limitation and reduction of armaments from the technical and political points of view, with their emphasis on exactly opposite characteristics, is simplified in the case of countries which, due to geographical and other causes, have more particularly specialized in one of the three fighting services and where the remaining ones do not, in any comparable measure, affect the power of diplomatic bargaining. England has been a purely naval Power ever since she was expelled from France in the Hundred Years' War, and her "Alliance value" has been derived chiefly from the strength of her Navy. When studying the attempts at disarmament and their influence upon foreign policy, it is, therefore, possible in the case of England to dissociate, up to a certain point, the three services and consider them separately. This renders easier not only analyses of policy but also technical considerations which are bound to be involved in any attempt to limit and reduce effectively any one of the fighting services.

The British Navy at the End of the Nineteenth Century

Since the Napoleonic Wars, Great Britain had lived on her naval reputation and faith in her naval strength. As a result, her navy

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was neglected; her ships were old and inefficient; the crews were badly trained; administration was slack.¹ Increased commercial competition, the strained political situation in Europe, the growing consciousness of isolation, the constant friction with France and Russia, and the scramble for colonial acquisitions which was just beginning anew contributed to a fresh realization in Great Britain of the importance of sea-power. Captain Mahan's books appearing at this time strengthened this realization.² The second Salisbury Administration undertook the task of modernizing the Navy, and by the Naval Defence Act of 1889 provided for seventy men-of-war, including ten battleships, to be built in seven years at a cost of £21,500,000. In putting this proposal before the House of Commons on March 7, 1889, Lord George Hamilton, First Lord of the Admiralty, declared the purpose of the Act to be the establishment of the Navy "on such a scale as it should be at least equal to the naval strength of any two other nations."³ This was the famous "Two-Power Standard" which the Admiralty has regarded as necessary to maintain British command of the seas. This policy was accepted in Europe and was not challenged until Germany began building her "risk navy."⁴

The Hague Peace Conference of 1899 found Great Britain still undisputed mistress of the seas.⁵ It was not to be expected, therefore, that she would take a leading part in the limitation of naval armaments and budgets as outlined in Count Mouravieff's letter of December 30, 1898-January 11, 1899. The position of the Admiralty was set forth in a letter to the Foreign Office on May 16, 1899.

"As regards the proposals to limit Naval forces their Lordships are of opinion that it will be found quite impracticable to come to any

¹ Schmitt, Bernadotte E., *England and Germany*, pp. 178-179.

² Richmond, *Economy and Naval Strength*, p. 15; Burrows, Montagu, *The History of the Foreign Policy of Great Britain*, p. 115.

³ 3 *Hansard*, cccxxxiii, col. 1171; Schmitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-178.

⁴ Richmond, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16. Asquith acceded to a definition of the Two-Power Standard by Lord Cawdor, First Lord of the Admiralty, who defined it as 10 per cent more than the total tonnage of the next two navies (Schmitt, *op. cit.*, p. 186 note).

⁵ Great Britain had laid down thirty ships-of-the-line before the end of the century (*ibid.*, pp. 177-178).

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agreement as to the meaning of the term 'effectifs actuels,' or to ensure that the terms of any agreement arrived at would be carried out. . . .

"With reference to the proposal to restrict improvements in weapons . . . any such restriction would favour the interests of savage nations, and be against those of the more highly civilized. It would be a retrograde step. . . .

"It is further observed that the proposal to limit the use of new explosives is believed to be impracticable unless the several Powers are prepared to make known to the Conference the nature and composition of those which they now use and which are at present secret. Their Lordships believe that none of the Great Powers would be prepared to do this.

"As to the various proposals to regulate the conduct of war . . . their Lordships are averse to binding this country in this manner, as such an arrangement would be almost certain to lead to mutual recriminations."¹

At the Conference the first proposal of the Russian Government that the submarine or diving torpedo boat or other engines of destruction of the same nature should be prohibited met with strong opposition on the part of the United States and France, although Great Britain and Germany were ready to accept the prohibition on condition of unanimity. A similar position was assumed by Great Britain with regard to the prohibition of war vessels with rams. Neither of these two weapons had proved particularly potent, and the British Admiralty was more than ready to forgo their use so long as everyone did so. But there could be no unanimity on naval disarmament proposals. Even the minor undertaking of agreeing not to increase naval budgets for three years after having previously stated the expenditure—a statement which could be made as high as desired, and hence high enough to cover all eventualities—was not acceptable to the nations represented at the Hague Conference.

In a note to the Foreign Office on the Limitation of Armaments, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles À Court reviewed and analysed the situation at the Hague Conference. After explaining that Germany's uncompromising attitude had prevented agreement on military matters, he wrote:

¹ *British Documents on the Origin of the War*, I, pp. 224–225.

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"England, as the greatest Naval Power, has not taken up the same uncompromising attitude in relation to naval armaments, and the question naturally arises whether some agreement may not be possible, if not with all, at least with some of the greater naval Powers.

"I have ascertained the views of the Naval Delegates here, and am compelled to admit, and to state my reasons for the belief, that there is not at present the slightest chance of an agreement of the kind."¹

Russia had no intentions of fighting a naval war with England, but could not limit her naval armaments so long as Germany and Japan did not do likewise. Neither the German nor the Japanese Governments intended to accept any check upon their naval activity. France was in a position similar to that of Russia. The two Powers against whom British naval building was aimed, therefore, while not entering into competition with the British Fleet, could not reduce their naval forces because they would thereby lose their position as naval Powers. As Lieutenant-Colonel À Court put it,

"The difficulties in the way of Naval disarmament are not at the top of the graduated scale of naval Powers, but at the bottom; they are none the less almost insuperable, and the crux of the problem lies in the fact that no Power can cry a halt while the one next below him on the scale continues to arm, and that the latter will not cease to arm until he has reached an equality with the rival above him."²

Anglo-German Naval Rivalry

It would have been to the advantage of Great Britain to have exerted more pressure at the Hague Conference to maintain the *status quo* in naval building, particularly in view of the German Navy Law of 1898 which laid the foundation for a strong German Navy.³ In 1898 the German Navy was composed of 9 battleships, 3 large cruisers, 28 small cruisers, and 113 torpedo boats. There were 3 battleships and 7 cruisers building. The total personnel

¹ *British Documents on the Origin of the War*, I, p. 230.

² *Ibid.*, I, pp. 230-231.

³ Fay, Sidney B., *The Origins of the World War*, I, p. 234.

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was 25,000 men.¹ It was in this year that the German Navy League was formed and that plans for a larger Navy were laid down in the Navy Law, which called for completion in six years, of 19 battleships, 8 coast-defence vessels, 12 large cruisers, and 30 small cruisers.² This programme was superseded by the Navy Law of 1900, which provided that the German Fleet should be composed in 1920 of 38 battleships, 14 large cruisers, 38 light cruisers, and the necessary auxiliary craft.³

In order to meet this challenge, Great Britain was obliged to concentrate in the North Sea the Fleet which was then covering the French and Russian Fleets in the Mediterranean and the Far East. Faced with a difficult diplomatic situation, the British Government decided to abandon its policy of isolation and approached the Russian and German Governments in turn to discuss the possibilities of an Entente.⁴ These overtures came to nothing. The voyage of Count Hayashi to London to raise a loan and secure an alliance with a European Power proved opportune. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance was signed on January 30, 1902, and proved of great value both to England and Japan.⁵ It freed Britain's Far East Squadron for service in home waters, but the price paid was naval supremacy in the Far East which she now definitely abandoned to her new ally.⁶

Great Britain proceeded forthwith to concentrate her naval forces in European waters. In 1903 she built a first-class naval

¹ Schmitt, *op. cit.*, p. 174. In 1898 Great Britain had 54 battleships, 14 coast-defence vessels, 104 cruisers, and several hundred torpedo boats.

² *Ibid.*, p. 175.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

⁴ Fay, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 124-141; Gooch, G. P., *History of Modern Europe*, Chap. IX; *British Documents on the Origin of the War*, I, Chaps. II and III.

⁵ Cf. Buell, Raymond L., *The Washington Conference*, Chap. IV.

⁶ This supremacy in Far Eastern waters was bound to be sacrificed if Japan allied herself with any European Power as Great Britain could not compete in the Far East as well as in the North Sea. The Anglo-French Entente of 1904 likewise permitted England to weaken her naval forces in the Mediterranean and eventually to withdraw them altogether, leaving the burden of protecting commerce to the French who bared their Atlantic seaboard to do this. This situation led to the English declaration to France of August 2, 1914, that, in any case, the British Government would not permit the German Navy to attack the French coast on the Atlantic (*British Documents on the Origin of the War*, XI, pp. 274-275; Churchill, Winston S., *The World Crisis*, I, pp. 201-203).

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base at Rosyth, and Lord Cawdor, First Lord of the Admiralty, brought out a programme of four battleships a year. The next year Sir John Fisher became First Sea Lord. He redistributed and reorganized the Navy. The Channel Squadron was heavily reinforced and a new Home Fleet was stationed in the North Sea. One hundred and sixty obsolete ships were scrapped, and in October 1905 the *Dreadnought*—the first of a new class of fast, heavily armed, and heavily armoured battleships—was laid down. Anglo-German rivalry was on.¹

The introduction of the *Dreadnought* gave Germany an advantage.² Whereas Great Britain had a decided superiority over Germany in pre-dreadnought battleships, she was starting with only a year's building advance over Germany in a race for new battleships which outclassed the old. England's start, however, was great, for in spite of a reduced naval programme in 1906 and 1907, she had in 1910 ten dreadnoughts to Germany's four.³ This lead was soon cut down as competition continued unabated to the end of the war. The Agadir Crisis of 1911 intensified the situation and led to the large programme of the German Naval Law—the "Novelle"—of 1912. At the outbreak of the war England had 40 older battleships and Germany 20. England had 29 modern battleships built and 15 building to Germany's 17 built and 11 building. England had 125 cruisers built or building while

¹ Fay, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 223-246; Gooch, *op. cit.*, Chap. XIII; Brandenburg, Eric, *From Bismarck to the World War*, Chap. XI; Tirpitz, Admiral von, *Der Aufbau der Deutschen Weltmacht*.

² This introduction was considered a serious mistake in policy and has been much criticized. It doubled the cost of building battleships and rendered of secondary importance all pre-dreadnought battleships of which Great Britain possessed a great number. The evolution toward the *Dreadnought*, however, was regular, so that its introduction was not as revolutionary a step as was first thought (*vide infra*, p. 115, note 1).

Sir John Fisher was well aware that Germany could and would also build such ships. He only hoped to get ahead of Germany so as to have a qualitative as well as a quantitative superiority in case of war. This had been the aim of many of his predecessors, and the same policy was followed successfully immediately before the war with the fast battleships with fifteen-inch guns (*Queen Elizabeth* class) which proved their worth in the Battle of Jutland. Churchill, *op. cit.*, I, Chap. VI.

³ Schmitt, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

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Germany only had 55. England had 237 torpedo craft; Germany, 154. Finally, she had 99 submarines to Germany's 45.¹

The cost of naval rivalry with Germany brought home to British statesmen the need for an understanding on the limitation of naval armaments. The Liberal Government of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman with a Radical-Pacifist majority in the Cabinet tried all possible methods of diplomacy to arrive at an understanding with Germany.² On December 21, 1905, Sir Henry, setting forth the platform of the new Liberal Government, deprecated the huge expenditure in armaments which was then being made. He reiterated this stand on many occasions and other members of the Cabinet did likewise.³ At a meeting at Bath in 1911, the National Liberal Federation expressed an opinion in favour of immediate reduction of armaments.⁴ As a result of the Algeciras Conference, in July 1906, the Cabinet announced a reduction of one battleship and the corresponding destroyers and submarines in the building programme set forth by Lord Cawdor. In 1907 the Cabinet, in view of the coming Hague Conference, announced a further decrease of one battleship in the naval building programme.⁵

It was in a different spirit from that evinced in 1899 that the British Government entered the Second Hague Conference. It reserved the right to bring up the question of limitation and reduction of armaments and military budgets. Britain desired to put an end to building competition with Germany, but, in case Germany would not agree, she intended to make it clear that

¹ Schmitt, *op. cit.*, p. 193. Admiral Richmond reached somewhat different figures. According to him, while in 1903 Great Britain had a navy equal to any two European navies combined, and a superiority of twenty-three ships fit to lie in the line over Germany, the British Fleet of 1914 was no longer on the "Two-Power Standard" and the superiority over Germany in ships already mentioned was eight ("Sea Warfare," *loc. cit.*, p. 109).

² *British Documents on the Origin of the War*, VII, *passim*.

³ *The Times*, December 22, 1905; *The Nation* (London), March 2, 1907; Grey of Fallodon, Viscount, *Speeches on Foreign Affairs, 1904-1914*, pp. 42, 45.

⁴ National Unionist Association, *The Campaign Guide* (14th ed.), p. 91.

⁵ Gooch, *op. cit.*, Chap. XIII. This decrease was answered by an increase in the German programme from two to three battleships in 1906 and a further increase to four in 1907 (Churchill, *op. cit.*, I, p. 39).

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it was Germany who obliged her to add ten or twenty millions a year to the Navy Estimates. Sir Edward Grey explained to Professor Martens that the British Government was prepared to make reductions in its programme of new construction of ships if other Powers would agree to do the same.¹ Preliminary conversations proved so unfruitful that the instructions to the British delegates merely authorized them "to say that His Majesty's Government would agree to a proposal that the Great Powers should so communicate to each other in advance their programmes of new naval construction."² Accordingly, at the fourth meeting of the Plenary Conference, on August 17, 1907, Sir Edward Fry, first delegate of Great Britain, spoke of the desirability of the reduction and limitation of armaments and declared, on behalf of his Government, that Great Britain was ready "to communicate annually to the Powers that would pursue the same course the programme for construction of new ships of war and the expenditure which this programme would entail. This exchange of information would facilitate an exchange of views between the Governments on the subject of the reductions which it might be possible to effect by mutual agreement."³ Some of the Great Powers, however, were not willing to discuss the limitation of armaments, and nothing was accomplished beyond what had already been done at the First Hague Conference, namely, recommendation to the Governments that they study the problem further.⁴

During the years which followed, all devices known to diplomacy were resorted to without success to put a stop to Anglo-German naval competition. Germany would not agree to a stabilization of the *status quo* when England held so clear a superiority. The Navy soon became a matter of "national honour and dignity" with the Kaiser, and he threatened war if pressure

¹ Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson, February 15, 1907, *British Documents on the Origin of the War*, VIII, pp. 207-209.

² Sir Edward Grey to Sir E. Fry, June 12, 1907, *British Documents on the Origin of the War*, VIII, pp. 242-250.

³ *Proceedings of the Hague Peace Conference*, Conference of 1907, I, p. 89.

⁴ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 90-92; Gooch, *op. cit.*, pp. 431-432; *British Documents on the Origin of the War*, VIII, Chap. LXV.

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were put on him to accept limitation.¹ Nevertheless, negotiations continued. Great Britain hoped to stop the race in naval armaments, but she was determined also to maintain British supremacy of the seas—a vital necessity for her safety and the trade and defence of her Empire. On March 2, 1908, Asquith declared that England stood or fell with her naval supremacy. This feeling was shared by the Cabinet. It formed the basis of the memorandum approved by Sir Edward Grey, Winston Churchill, and Lloyd George which Sir Ernest Cassel took with him to Berlin to pave the way for the Anglo-German negotiations which resulted in the visit of Lord Haldane to Berlin in 1912. Unwillingness on the part of Sir Edward Grey to jeopardize the Entente with France in order to furnish a basis for arrangements with Germany and the intractability of the Kaiser and von Tirpitz in regard to the German Navy Law "Novelle" led to the abandonment of negotiations between England and Germany. Lord Haldane had made it clear that Great Britain intended to lay down two dreadnoughts to Germany's one.² The British Cabinet endorsed this policy. The Home Fleet was strengthened by the Atlantic Fleet based at Gibraltar. Churchill made another attempt at reconciliation on March 26, 1913, by suggesting a naval holiday of one year. This suggestion fell on deaf ears. It was renewed in October 1913, but competition continued unabated and competition culminated in war.

The Naval Disarmament of Germany

Naval competition continued *à outrance* throughout the war. The German High Sea Fleet was covered by the Grand Fleet and was kept covered during the entire war. Several cruisers escaped, and they and the submarines which Germany sent out in great numbers waged a *guerre de course* which decimated Allied shipping³

¹ *Grosse Politik*, XXV, p. 478; XXIV, pp. 53, 103-104, 126-128; von Tirpitz, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

² Fay, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 293-312; Gooch, *op. cit.*, pp. 492-496.

³ First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Lee of Fareham, stated at the Washington Conference on December 22, 1921, that German submarines sank 12,000,000 tons of shipping of a value of \$1,100,000,000, apart from their cargo (*The Conference on the Limitation of Armaments*, pp. 478-480).

British Attitude on Naval Disarmament

and seriously threatened British naval supremacy. This supremacy was not completely assured until the Armistice. When drafting the naval terms of the Armistice, the Allied Naval Council demanded of Germany the surrender of 150 submarines—all that were then in condition to put to sea—10 battleships, 6 battle cruisers, and various light craft. Nothing short of this would have satisfied the British Admiralty, which desired to be assured that submarine warfare should not continue and that the supremacy of British naval arms should not again be challenged.¹ These terms were considered too severe by the Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers of France, Great Britain, and Italy meeting with Colonel House to discuss the terms of the Armistice.² After many discussions, the terms of the Allied Naval Council were modified, against the judgment of the naval experts, in order that Germany's acceptance of the Armistice might not be endangered by asking too much.³ The final terms included the surrender of the submarine fleet able to put to sea⁴ and the internment in "neutral ports or, failing them, Allied ports" of 6 battle cruisers, 10 battleships, 8 light cruisers, including 2 minelayers and 50 destroyers of the most modern types.⁵ It was the fact that these ships were interned and not surrendered which enabled their

¹ It was the desire to ensure the supremacy of the British Navy which influenced the Naval Allied Council in their terms. Sir Eric Geddes, in presenting their programme, said: "The list of ships to be surrendered has been drawn up on the basis that if the Grand Fleet and the High Sea Fleet were to fight a battle, the German Fleet would come out of it with the loss of the equivalent of these ships. A second reason is that if President Wilson's conditions are to be fulfilled and the Germans are not to be in position to renew the war under better conditions than those at present existing, their fleet must be cut down as proposed" (Seymour, Charles, *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, IV, pp. 129-132).

² *Ibid.*, IV, p. 120.

³ *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 129-138; Mermeix, *Les Négotiations Secrètes et les Quatre Armistices*.

⁴ As the number of submarines on the stocks almost ready to put to sea was large, subsequent renewals of the Armistice contained clauses demanding the surrender of all such submarines which could be put to sea and the breaking up of those partially constructed (Temperley, H. W. V., *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, II, pp. 141-158).

⁵ Cmd. 54 of 1919; Seymour, *op. cit.*, IV, Chap. V. On November 11, 1918, the German and Austrian naval strength was 22 battleships, 6 battle cruisers, 41 light cruisers, 134 destroyers, and 239 submarines (Temperley, *op. cit.*, II, p. 141, note).

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crews, which were thereby left in charge of them, to scuttle them later at Scapa Flow.

This internment and the subsequent disposal of the ships by the Allied and Associated Powers marked the end of the German High Sea Fleet which had been the cause of such rivalry with Great Britain. The British Navy emerged from the war supreme, but, in order to assure this supremacy, it was necessary to prevent the same rivalry springing up again. The British Admiralty demanded as essential to peace the reduction of German naval power to the minimum necessary for the defence of German coasts. All completed submarines were to be surrendered and all submarines building in German yards to be destroyed. All the German ships already interned were to be surrendered for destruction. Finally, in order to make it impossible for Germany to prey upon commerce with armed merchant ships operating from oversea bases, the Admiralty demanded that all German oversea possessions be taken away from her permanently.¹

As the British Navy predominated among the Allied navies, it was to be expected that the point of view of the British Admiralty would be reflected in the terms of peace, just as the French military predominance gave to Marshal Foch the position of chief military adviser to the Allied and Associated Powers. The stress of the Admiralty on the direct limitation of material was evident in the first draft of the naval clauses as contained in the Joint Note from the Committee of the Admirals of the Allied and Associated Powers presented to the Supreme War Council at its meeting of February 8, 1919. This draft did not provide for the limitation of personnel, but exclusively for the limitation of material.² These limitations were later complemented by the strict limitation of naval personnel introduced for the purpose of co-ordinating the military, naval, and air clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. In general, the method of naval disarmament of Germany was essentially that advocated by the British Admiralty. Throughout the post-war years the British Admiralty has always advocated

¹ Temperley, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 143-144.

² Miller, D. H., *My Diary at the Conference of Paris*, XIV, pp. 292-299.

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naval disarmament by direct limitation of material both qualitative and quantitative. This has been, in fact, the attitude of the British Government on the method of limiting all armaments, military, naval, and air. The measures advocated by the Admiralty were in substance carried out in Article 125 of the Treaty of Versailles which alienated German colonies to place them under mandate and in Part V of the same Treaty which imposed strict limitations upon Germany's armaments. Germany was no longer to be in a position to threaten her neighbours by land or sea.

Under Articles 181 to 197 of the Treaty of Versailles¹ the German Navy is limited to 6 battleships of the *Deutschland* or *Lothringen* type; 6 light cruisers; 12 destroyers; and 12 torpedo boats. The number of these ships is never to be exceeded.² Replacement is permitted twenty years after the date of launching for the battleships and cruisers and fifteen years for the destroyers and torpedo boats. The tonnage of each unit replaced is fixed. Battleships cannot exceed 10,000 tons; cruisers, 6,000 tons; destroyers, 800 tons; and torpedo boats, 200 tons. Germany is permitted no submarines for either naval or commercial purposes and all naval aircraft is forbidden to her. Her warships are to carry only a certain allowance of arms, ammunition, and other war material which will be fixed by the Allies. All ships not to be retained by Germany are to be surrendered to the Allies. The German auxiliary cruisers and fleet auxiliaries are to be disarmed and treated as merchant ships. The manufacture of naval material may be carried on only in certain designated places and Germany

¹ For text of the Treaty, *vide British and Foreign State Papers*, CXII, pp. 1-211.

² When peace was signed the German Navy consisted of 8 battleships of the *Deutschland* and *Braunschweig* class (*Braunschweig*, *Elsass*, *Hessen*, *Pruessen*, *Lothringen*, *Hammer*, *Schlesien*, *Schleswig-Holstein*); of 8 light cruisers (*Niobe*, *Nympe*, *Arkona*, *Medusa*, *Amazon*, *Thetis*, *Berlin*, *Hamburg*), and of 16 destroyers and 16 torpedo boats. Besides this, the Conference of Ambassadors allowed Germany to retain the following auxiliaries, not to be armed except the gun training ships: 4 gun training vessels, 8 tenders, fishery protection ships, 4 surveying launches, 38 minesweepers, 2 surveying ships, 1 sailing training ship, and an unrestricted number of barrage vessels (Von Baumbach, Lieutenant-Commander, Norbert, G.N., "The German Navy," *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1931, pp. 95-103).

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is prohibited from importing or exporting naval material. Fortifications commanding the passage into the Baltic are to be demolished. Other fortifications may remain, but no new ones may be built. A statement of ammunition and armaments of fortifications must be given to the Allies, and stocks of ammunition must be limited to fifteen hundred rounds per piece for calibres of 4·1 inch and under and five hundred rounds per piece for higher calibres.

The total personnel of the German Navy, including the manning of the Fleet, coast defences, signal stations, administration and other land services, must not exceed fifteen thousand including officers and men of all grades and corps. Officers and warrant officers must not exceed fifteen hundred. No reserves may be organized that are not included in the above figure. The personnel of the Navy is to be recruited entirely by voluntary engagement for the minimum period of twenty-five consecutive years for officers and warrant officers, and twelve consecutive years for petty officers and men. Discharges must not exceed 5 per cent per annum. No officer or man of the mercantile marine shall receive training in the Navy. These provisions are placed under the control of an Allied Commission which is to supervise the immediate execution of them. Furthermore, the Council of the League of Nations is given the right to lay down the procedure to investigate in Germany the execution of the disarmament provisions.

These provisions were decided upon by the Principal Allied and Associated Powers without much thought to the principles and techniques involved. The task of limiting the naval armaments of Germany was put before the Inter-Allied Naval Council which advised on the armaments which should be left to Germany. The work was entirely empirical.¹ The direct limitation of material advocated by the British Admiralty as the only effective method of disarming Germany was complemented by clauses so limiting personnel as to prevent evasion of the military clauses of the Treaty. The disarmament provisions of the Treaty of

¹ Cf. Temperley, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 141-158.

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Versailles limit the naval armaments of Germany both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative limitations are the limitations on the number of ships, officers and men, and ammunition and war material. The qualitative limitations are those on the size of the ships, the prohibition of the submarine and the naval aircraft, and the dismantlement of all fortifications commanding the passage into the Baltic. These fortifications were prohibited because they were considered as maintained for offensive purposes.¹

One loophole only was left; there was no limitation of budgetary expenditures on armaments. This permitted the building of the "pocket battleship," the *Ersatz-Preussen*, later christened the *Deutschland*. This lacuna exists, evidently, because the experts did not think budgetary limitation necessary in view of the very strict direct limitations already imposed. When the limitation or reduction of military budgets had been discussed, as it was at the First Hague Conference and between Great Britain and Germany before the war, it was discussed in lieu of more stringent limitations and not as a necessary complement to direct limitation. This stage of thinking was not arrived at until the sixth session of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference. It is interesting to note that it was immediately after the building of the *Deutschland* that the British Government advocated budgetary limitation as a necessary complement to direct limitation of military, naval, and air armaments. Apart from this lacuna,² however, the foregoing provisions of the Treaty of Versailles combine all the most effective methods of limiting naval armaments and put the German Navy in a decidedly subordinate position.

The most important limitation is evidently that of the warships

¹ The distinction between fortifications for offensive and defensive purposes was drawn by Lloyd George and Balfour in the meeting of the Supreme War Council of March 6, 1919. This distinction was written into the Treaty at the proposal of Lloyd George (Miller, *op. cit.*, XV, pp. 189-191).

² The report of the Committee on Budgetary Limitation of the World Disarmament Conference showed that only a general limitation of budgetary expenditure on armaments is practicable and that particular limitations of expenditure on naval or land material are not feasible. The lacuna in the limitation of German naval armaments was therefore unavoidable.

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themselves. Limited both in numbers and tonnage of each unit, the German Fleet cannot be expanded suddenly in any category, as it could be if only the total tonnage had been specified. Except for the factor of expenditure already mentioned, the imposed limitation makes the system rigid and permits of no surprises. These provisions would have sufficed. The limitation of ammunition and war material was added primarily to prevent evasion of the provisions for land disarmament where the number of guns and the ammunition therefore are strictly limited. The size of the ship is itself sufficient limitation of the amount of war material that can be used on it. There is no possibility, however, of differentiating between a shell made for a naval gun and one made for land artillery of the same calibre. Without a limitation of the ammunition for naval guns, the limitation of the ammunition for land artillery would be of no value. The situation regarding war material is analogous. The same argument also applies to limitation of the war material of permitted fortifications. This illustrates well the interdependence of land and naval armaments in the limitation of war material.

Interdependence also exists with regard to personnel. Limitation of the ships automatically limits the personnel which can effectively be used on them. Nevertheless, the provisions restricting personnel and preventing the accumulation of great numbers of trained naval reserves is of prime importance in view of the limitation of land effectives and the very strict provisions against the formation of army-trained reserves. It is obvious that if naval personnel were not restricted, a large army could be trained in the navy yards and in navy uniforms as part of naval personnel, thereby evading the limitation upon land effectives. Of course a large naval reserve would also be important if extra naval material could be procured abroad in a moment of crisis. Hence the prohibition to Germany to export and import naval armaments.¹

Germany's naval forces were reduced to the minimum necessary to protect her shores from attack by sea.² Speaking of the Peace

¹ Cf. Baker, P. J. N., *Disarmament*, pp. 177-182.

² The reply of the Allied and Associated Powers to the German observations on the Treaty of Versailles stated that the naval clauses of the Treaty "are based

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Conference before the House of Commons, on April 16, 1919, Lloyd George said:

"One of the most beneficial results of peace, in my judgment, will be that the great continental menace of armaments will be swept away. The country that has kept Europe armed for forty years is to be reduced to an army which is just adequate to police her cities and her villages, and with her fleet, which was a sort of terror to us—a hidden terror—she will now have just enough to protect her commerce and no more. We must profit by that. Europe must profit by it, and not Germany alone."¹

The possible duration of these benefits to peace was discussed in the Supreme War Council. The American naval adviser wished to see the naval disarmament provisions in force until Germany had fulfilled all terms of the Armistice. The military advisers, however, insisted on perpetual disarmament of German land forces. The British Government was quite ready to accept German disarmament for a generation, but the French delegates insisted upon keeping Germany perpetually disarmed.²

Mr. Balfour, at the meeting of March 3, 1919, proposed a compromise in the form of the following draft:

"The limitation of German armaments, whether military, or naval, or aerial, shall last until Germany has fulfilled all the obligations imposed on her by the peace terms, and thereafter, for as long as, and with such modifications as, the League of Nations may determine."³

The experts came to agreement only by omitting all mention of the duration of the disarmament provisions.⁴ Mr. Balfour, at the meeting of March 6, 1919, renewed his proposal that disarmament provisions should first be carried out and that, later, the League should determine whether further limitations could be imposed or complete freedom of action granted.⁵ The Supreme War

on the desire for a general limitation of the armaments of all nations and at the same time leave to Germany the requisite force for self-protection and police duties" (*British and Foreign State Papers*, CXII, p. 276).

¹ 114 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 2954-2955.

² Miller, *op. cit.*, XV, pp. 138-143; Tardieu, *The Truth About the Treaty*, p. 131. *Vide infra*, p. 264.

³ Miller, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-143. ⁴ *Ibid.*, XV, p. 177. ⁵ *Ibid.*, XV, p. 186.

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Council endorsed the decision of the experts and the disarmament clauses contain no time limit.

Naval Disarmament at the Peace Conference of Paris

The strong consciousness of the desirability of a limitation of armaments engendered by Anglo-German naval competition before the war impelled British statesmen to demand not only the disarmament of Germany, but also some general measure of limitation of armaments. In his outline of the British war aims put forth on January 5, 1918, Lloyd George gave as his third condition essential to permanent peace the creation of some international organization "to limit the burden of armaments and diminish the probability of war."¹ This condition was discussed at the Peace Conference and formed the basis of the peace negotiations as the Fourth of Wilson's Fourteen Points.² It was Wilson's idea to lay down the principles of disarmament of all Powers, these principles to be later applied by the League of Nations.³ On January 23, 1919, Lloyd George presented a plan to the Council of Ten calling for the appointment of a commission "to prepare a plan in connection with the League of Nations for a permanent reduction in the burden of military, naval, and aerial forces and armaments."⁴

The general idea of disarmament in connection with the League of Nations was discussed during the drafting of the Covenant. In his preliminary outline for a Society of Nations, Hunter Miller had commented that naval disarmament concerned primarily the United States and Great Britain.⁵ This seemed to be generally recognized, for the various drafts for a disarmament article to be included in the Covenant were either very general or aimed specifically at the regulation of land armaments. Miller, however,

¹ Temperley, *op. cit.*, I, p. 192.

² Delivered to Congress on January 8, 1918. The Fourth Point reads as follows: "Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety."

³ Baker, R. S., *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, I, pp. 347-349.

⁴ *Ibid.*, I, p. 352.

⁵ Miller, *op. cit.*, II, p. 131.

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proposed an amendment to Article IV of Wilson's Second Draft, or First Paris Draft, prohibiting the use of submarines in warfare.¹ Nothing came of this and the disarmament article of the Covenant, Article 8, contains merely the general recognition by the members "that the maintenance of peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations."

The Admiralty joined the other British fighting services in demanding further and fuller consideration of Article 8 of the Covenant because its adoption "involves consequences of so grave a nature and so prejudicial to the interests of this and other countries." While in entire sympathy with the desire to reduce the total armaments of the world,

"they feel bound to point out that the introduction at the present stage of proposals for the limitation of armaments, before the League of Nations has established its power to afford security to its members, may delay rather than advance the reduction of armaments, since many intricate and delicate questions, the solution of which should preferably await an atmosphere of security, will be involved.

"3. Further, the acceptance of the proposal for limitation of armaments entails a serious constitutional consequence which the Admiralty . . . cannot accept without the strongest protest: namely, the abrogation of the constitutional duty of advising their Government as to the strength of their naval . . . forces."²

In spite of the attitude of the Admiralty, Lloyd George in his memorandum of March 26, 1919, to M. Clemenceau, again stressed the necessity of an understanding among the victorious Powers in regard to armaments. He affirmed that "the first condition of success for the League of Nations is, therefore, a firm understanding between the British Empire and the United States and France and Italy that there will be no competitive building

¹ The suggested draft was: "The Contracting Parties agree never to make use of armed submarines in naval operations, and further agree that they will hereafter build no submarines armed or capable of being armed, and further agree that all submarines now in existence or under construction shall be dismantled and rendered incapable of being armed or shall be destroyed" (Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant*, II., pp. 73-74).

² Quoted in Miller, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 286-287.

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up of fleets or armies between them. Unless this is arrived at before the Covenant is signed the League of Nations will be a sham and mockery.”¹ The British delegation was ready to discuss even the decrease of navies, provided a general agreement on this matter could be reached.² It was particularly desirous of an agreement with the United States. In a meeting of Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and Colonel House, on March 10, 1919, Lloyd George spoke of the necessity for an agreement between England and America not to rival each other in naval building.³

Great Britain, after the war, had reached the zenith of her naval power. At the date of the Armistice, she possessed 1,354 combatant vessels amounting to 3,250,000 tons, a total tonnage equal to nearly all the other navies of the world put together.⁴ The German menace was done away with, the only other important rival for the supremacy of the seas was the United States. The British Admiralty, therefore, was anxious to fortify its strong position by an agreement with the United States that there would be no competitive building. The United States, on the other hand, had planned by the 1916 Navy Law to lay down a fleet which would be second to none. This determination on the part of the Americans arose largely from the question of sea-power the use of which had become a subject of controversy between them and Great Britain. President Wilson decided to apply the pressure of armaments competition to force the British to admit the American view of belligerent rights. The whole question arose sharply during the discussion of Wilson's Fourteen Points as the basis of the Armistice.

Point 2 read as follows:

“Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas outside territorial waters alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.”

¹ Cmd. 2169 of 1924, p. 80.

² Baker, R. S., *op. cit.*, I, p. 388.

³ Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris*, VI, pp. 316-317.

⁴ Great Britain had 42 dreadnought capital ships, 109 cruising vessels, 13 aircraft carriers, 527 destroyers and torpedo boats, and 137 submarines (Bywater, Hector, *Navies and Nations*, p. 20).

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Exactly what was meant by "freedom of the seas" was not clear, as there were many interpretations of the phrase. House said it did not exclude the right of blockade.¹ According to an American Navy Memorandum presented to Admiral Benson on November 7, 1918, freedom of the seas meant the freedom of neutral vessels to trade with belligerents in non-contraband goods and in non-blockaded areas. The United States was in agreement with Great Britain as to the existing laws of neutrality, "but, the liberality of interpretation of those rules which a great navy permits to Great Britain operates to the greater restriction of freedom of commerce."² Therefore, the navy memorandum recommended that, as the absolute freedom of the seas was impracticable, certain modifications in existing practice were necessary to make the rules more rigid, particularly with regard to articles of contraband and area of blockade. Miller, in a preliminary outline of the questions affecting an association of nations, likewise put for consideration the limitation or abolition of contraband and the modification and limitation of pre-war rules of blockade.³ On the other hand, the memorandum on the Freedom of the Seas of Sir Graham Bower, which was adopted by the British Maritime Law Committee of the International Law Association, stressed the necessity of contraband in view of the difficulty of maintaining continuous effective blockade. It retained the differentiation between absolute and conditional contraband, and the right of belligerents to declare what is conditional contraband and to preempt it.⁴

The policy of the United States on the maritime rights of neutrals in time of war has varied according to whether she was neutral or belligerent. The depredations on the very remunerative American trade with France and Holland, occasioned by British action under Sir Walter Scott's (later Lord Stowell) extension

¹ Seymour, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 186.

² "Navy Memorandum, Paris, November 7, 1918, submitted to Admiral Benson," Miller, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 89-100.

³ "Preliminary Outline," *ibid.*, II, p. 129-134.

⁴ "Memorandum on the Freedom of the Seas by Sir Graham Bower," *ibid.*, IV, pp. 358-362.

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of the "rule of the war of 1756" to apply to continuous voyage, was one of the causes of the Anglo-American War of 1812. Nevertheless, in the American Civil Wars the North enforced a strict blockade of the whole Southern Coast and promulgated many extensions to the existing rules of maritime law.¹ In spite of such practice, the American Government has tended to support neutral contentions for freer commerce. It refused to ratify the Declaration of Paris of 1856 on sea warfare and, at the Hague Conferences, supported the recognition of the inviolability of private property at sea, contraband excepted, during peace and war.² Great Britain, on the other hand, has steadily developed her practice either as neutral or belligerent, on the principle that all sea-borne commerce of the enemy is liable to seizure or destruction and that the same applies to the commerce of neutrals with the enemy in respect to contraband goods, *i.e.* goods which might help the enemy in carrying on war.³

This practice has been followed in all wars⁴ between naval Powers and has proved a decisive factor in many wars in which Great Britain has been a party.⁵ It received the approval of the United States at the Naval Conference of London of 1909 in a Declaration wherein concessions were exchanged by Great Britain and the United States. The application of this Declaration became very difficult because the requirements of a modern nation at war are such as to make it impossible to differentiate between conditional and absolute contraband. It was evident that many

¹ Cf. Moore, John Bassett, *International Law Digest*, VII, Chap. XXIV; Hall, J. A., *The Law of Naval Warfare*, Chaps. VI and VII; Raulin, G. de, *Le Blocus*, Chaps. VII, VIII, XII.

² Cf. Mahan's statement that "Public opinion in the United States has great faith in war directed against an enemy's commerce" (Mahan, A. T., *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, pp. 25-59).

³ Hall, *op. cit.*, Chap. VI; Raulin, *op. cit.* Chaps. VII and VIII.

⁴ Except in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, where ships and cargoes of each country were exempt from capture by the mutual consent of the parties. Prussia offered to apply the same principles to France in 1870, but the latter refused. At that time the Prussian Navy was negligible.

⁵ "It can scarcely be denied that England's uncontrolled dominion of the seas, during almost the whole period chosen for our subject, was by long odds the chief among the military factors that determined the final issue" (Mahan, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64).

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of the goods on the free list were being diverted to the armed forces at the expense of the civil population.¹ Great Britain and the Allies were soon forced to abandon the application of the Declaration of 1909 by which they had stated they would be bound although it had not been properly ratified. The United States voiced many objections to the more and more irksome regulations imposed by the Allies. She finally adopted the 1916 Naval Programme by which she would build a navy second to none and, by this means, insure the protection of what she considered her neutral rights.²

During the war, however, the United States not only followed the same practice as the Allies, but insisted on making it more rigid. In spite of this, President Wilson demanded the recognition by all Powers that private property at sea is not liable to seizure by belligerent vessels. The strength of his attachment to this principle is shown by the fact that he threatened to start building competition against Great Britain unless she would accede to his demands.³ The British, at the height of their naval power after the defeat of Germany, could never agree to this without sacrificing the whole value of naval power which has always lain in the possibility of investment of the enemy, that is the interruption of his lines of communication and distribution. Should she abandon the possibility of investment, Great Britain would seal the doom not only of her naval supremacy, but also of her political dominance in the Councils of Europe. Her "alliance value" would be gone and she would be relegated to the position of a second-rate Power as were Portugal, Spain, and Holland after the loss of their naval strength.⁴ The British were unwilling to abandon the method of warfare by which they had so recently driven the enemy to surrender, and of which they themselves had felt the

¹ As, for example, foodstuffs. Aeroplanes were placed on the conditional contraband list at the London Conference of 1909!

² Hall, *op. cit.*, Chap. VII; Raulin, *op. cit.*, Chap. XII; Williams, Benjamin H., *The United States and Disarmament*, Part I.

³ Wilson to House, November 4, 1918. Seymour, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 184.

⁴ For a general discussion of the problem *vide* Richmond, Admiral Sir H. W., *Imperial Defence and Capture at Sea in War*, Part II.

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potency when the German submarines brought them to the brink of starvation.

Lloyd George voiced British sentiment when he said to Colonel House in late October 1918, "This point we cannot accept under any conditions; it means that the power of blockade goes."¹ House explained that inviolability of private property at sea did not mean the end of blockade. Lloyd George would not be moved. He saw in the doctrine of the freedom of the seas the end of British sea-power. In his memorandum on the Fourteen Points he reserved to the British delegation its complete freedom on this point when it entered the Peace Conference,² and he told House that Great Britain "would spend her last guinea to keep a navy superior to that of the United States or any other Power, and that no Cabinet official could continue in Government in England who took a different position."³ The British reservation was not acceptable to House, who hoped for adoption of the principle of the freedom of the seas on the understanding that it did not abolish the right to blockade. The problem was finally postponed after Lloyd George had agreed to discuss the application of the principle at the Peace Conference.⁴ This discussion did not take place at the Peace Conference because President Wilson, as he told some of his associates, did not think it necessary in view of the fact that there would be neutrality under Article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.⁵

While forming the subject of no formal deliberations at the Peace Conference, the problem of Anglo-American naval competition was nevertheless the subject of much private negotiation between the American and British delegations. The British had

¹ Seymour, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 168. Cf. Memorandum of Admiral Wemyss on the Freedom of the Seas, dated October 17, 1918. Summarized in Beadon, *Some Memories of the Peace Conference*, pp. 55-57.

² Seymour, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 175.

³ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 186.

⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 168-193.

⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 432, note; Baker, R. S., *op. cit.*, I, pp. 382-383. Miller, in a memorandum on the Relations of Sea-Power to a League of Nations, stated: "The conclusion is that, upon adoption of an effective programme for a League of Nations, any revision of the rules of capture, contraband, blockade, etc., is a matter of only academic importance" (Miller, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 262-264; cf. Beadon, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-81).

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now a very wide margin of superiority over any other Power. British naval experts, therefore, looked with suspicious eyes upon the execution of the American Naval Programme of 1916 which was to make the American Navy second to none. The American experts, with Admiral Benson as leader and Secretary Daniels as staunch supporter, pressed for a navy which would be at least as strong as the British.¹ Long discussions took place among the experts, discussions which were to continue throughout the post-war years.² President Wilson desired to see America and England share equally the Command of the Seas and resorted to competitive naval building as a threat against the British to secure concessions on his programme. As the British delegation was anxious to come to an understanding with the United States Government on the subject of naval competition, it took advantage of the fact that acceptance of the Covenant was Wilson's chief interest and demanded a naval understanding before committing itself on the Covenant.

During March and April 1919, there were many conversations between the American and British delegations regarding the limitation of naval armaments. On March 6, 1919, Lloyd George discussed the subject with House at a private luncheon. House resumes the conversation in his Diary:

"I thought that if the British did not consent to the sinking of the German fleet instead of partitioning it, it would lead to a large naval programme in America and that England and the United States would be in the same attitude toward one another in the future as England and Germany had been in the past. He readily recognized this, and asked me to say this at the Quai d'Orsay when the question came up."³

On March 10, 1919, Lloyd George and House again discussed the sinking of German ships, and the British Prime Minister said that an agreement between the United States and Great Britain must be reached not to rival one another in naval building.⁴

¹ "United States Policy," United States Naval Staff, Paris, to President Wilson, April 7, 1919, Baker, R. S., *op. cit.*, III, pp. 207-217; United States Naval Staff to American Delegation, March 13, 1919, *ibid.*, III, pp. 198-205.

² Seymour, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 432.

³ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 367.

⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 370; Miller, *op. cit.*, VI, pp. 316-317.

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The subject was worrying Lloyd George, who wanted Secretary of the Navy Daniels and Walter Long, First Lord of the Admiralty, to talk the matter over and reach some real understanding.

Daniels had an interview with Walter Long in which Long told him that Great Britain "was alarmed lest the big programme of construction by the United States then under way would reduce the British Navy to second place. He said that his country could not contemplate such a thing with equanimity." Finally, he declared that "Mr. Lloyd George cannot support the League of Nations unless the United States will agree to cease construction of its big naval programme. Great Britain cannot consent to any other nation having supremacy on the seas." At Wilson's suggestion, Daniels then had a conversation with Lloyd George. Lloyd George held the view that the English-speaking nations should lead the way in disarmament if they believed in the League. As Great Britain had stopped work on her capital ships, the United States ought to do so likewise. Asked whether his support of the League depended on a naval agreement, Lloyd George answered, "Of course not, but the League of Nations would be a mere piece of rhetoric if we continue to build dreadnoughts." Lloyd George explained that the British objected to the American ships with 16-inch guns and that the Admiralty was applying pressure on him to prevent the building of these powerful vessels. The conversations ended before an understanding had been reached.¹

A few days later, Lloyd George took advantage of the disagreement among the Allies on the Monroe Doctrine amendment to the Covenant of the League to secure some definite commitment from House, saying that he would not agree to the amendment without a previous understanding on naval building programmes.² House drafted a letter to Lloyd George objecting to this attitude, but before sending it he suggested to Lord Robert Cecil that

¹ Secretary Daniels's Diary in "The Naval Battle of Paris," article in the Hearst Press, January 30, 1929. Cf. Moore, *America's Naval Challenge*, pp. 27 ff.

² Colonel House to Lloyd George, April 8, 1919, Miller, *op. cit.*, I, p. 206; VIII, p. 141.

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he write him a letter setting forth the British point of view. Acting upon this suggestion, Cecil wrote House a letter on April 8, 1919, in which he voiced the fear that naval competition between the two Powers would seriously jeopardize the future of the League of Nations. Since, in view of the special conditions of the British Empire, any challenge to British naval power could not fail to be taken up, Cecil asked House if it were not possible for the Americans to abandon or modify their new naval programme after the signature of the Treaty in return for corresponding British assurances and to consult with the British from year to year as to their respective naval programmes.¹ House consulted with President Wilson and wrote to Cecil that he was in cordial agreement with him and that the United States was ready to abandon or modify her new naval programme, that is the programme not yet provided by law, and to consult from year to year with the British Government. The President fully understood and recognized the special position of Great Britain as an Island Empire.²

On the next day, Cecil and House met to discuss this correspondence. Cecil told House that Lloyd George was not satisfied with House's reply to Cecil regarding the naval programme. House, therefore, explained that the President could not interfere with the programme already passed by Congress but would consider the postponement of ships not already begun. He assured Cecil that the President had no idea in mind of building a fleet in competition with that of Great Britain. The United States would not bargain with the naval programme in exchange for support on the Monroe Doctrine but intended to take the position she believed to be right.³ Cecil reported the conversation to Lloyd George in a memorandum which he submitted to House for approval. This memorandum House submitted to Wilson who approved.⁴

¹ Lord Robert Cecil to Colonel House, April 8, 1919, Miller, *op. cit.*, VIII, pp. 139-145; Seymour, *op. cit.*, IV, pp. 433-435.

² Colonel House to Lord Robert Cecil, April 9, 1919, *ibid.*, IV, pp. 436-437.

³ Miller, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 234-235.

⁴ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 236-237; Seymour, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 437.

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"He [House] then urged that it really would be much better to leave the thing as it was left by his letter to me: that we might fully rely on the intention of the President not to build in competition with us; and that he thought some arrangement as to the relative strengths of the fleets ought to be arrived at; and that conversations with that object might well be begun as soon as the Treaty of Peace was signed."¹

This exchange of views satisfied the British Government that although nothing could be done regarding the building programme already approved the American Government would be willing to come to some understanding on naval armaments. The British Admiralty was not ready to enter into any agreement on naval building until England's future naval policy was settled, but desired to make sure that an Anglo-American rivalry similar to the pre-war Anglo-German rivalry should not spring up. The informal assurances given by House on behalf of Wilson satisfied Lloyd George on this point.

Closely linked up with these private negotiations concerning Anglo-American naval competition was the question of the disposal of the German and Austrian war vessels which were surrendered under the Peace Treaties.² This question had been broached at a meeting of the Allied Prime Ministers with Colonel House on October 29, 1918. Colonel House asked what the Allies would do with the ships they were to take away from Germany. Lloyd George had replied: "They will divide them. You can sink them if you like; you must take them away from Germany."³ Two days later, the Italians raised the same point with regard to the Austrian ships.⁴ Fear that a large number of German ships might be incorporated in the British Navy had caused

¹ Memorandum of the Conversation between Colonel House and Lord Robert Cecil, April 10, 1919, Seymour, *op. cit.*, IV, pp. 437-438.

² The ships which were finally surrendered to the Allies for distribution were (including the ships sunk at Scapa Flow): German—19 battleships, 5 battle cruisers, 21 light cruisers, 2 destroyer leaders, 87 torpedo-boat destroyers, 50 torpedo boats, and 1 auxiliary vessel; Austrian—13 battleships, 22 cruisers, 9 light cruisers, 19 destroyers, 55 torpedo boats, 10 torpedo gunboats, and 4 mining vessels. *The Times*, October 12, 1920. Cf. Baker, R. S., *op. cit.*, III, p. 198; 128 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1696-1697.

³ Seymour, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 120.

⁴ Mermeix, *Les négociations secrètes et les quatre armistices*, pp. 209-210.

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House to warn Lloyd George that such a step would entail naval competition with the United States. At a meeting of Lloyd George, Clemenceau, and House, on March 7, 1919, the naval terms of the Peace Treaty with Germany came up for discussion. These terms provided for the sinking or dismantling of the German ships, but M. Clemenceau and M. Leygues made reservations in favour of partitioning them among the Allies.¹ House stated that "the British were on the point of yielding to this, but I told Lloyd George that we could never consent to the British augmenting their navy so largely; if this were done it would surely lead to American and British rivalry in this direction."² Thereupon, the British Prime Minister proposed

"That a share of the German Fleet should be handed over to France to recoup her for her losses and for the cessation of naval construction imposed on France by the war. The British and American shares would be sunk in some manner to be arranged simultaneously in mid-Atlantic as part of an Anglo-American understanding about naval armaments."³

Great Britain, the United States, and Italy were in favour of distribution of the ships among the Powers for breaking up.⁴ France, on the other hand, wanted to incorporate her share into her fleet because she had had no time to build during the war and it would save money to take over the German ships rather than build new ones.⁵ She was particularly insistent upon keeping for her own use some of the submarines surrendered to her under the terms of the Armistice, as she had built no submarines during the war. The whole position was brought out in the meeting of

¹ Miller, *op. cit.*, XV, pp. 184-185.

² Colonel House to the President, Paris, March 7, 1919. Seymour, *op. cit.*, IV, pp. 368-369. This statement of House was made at Lloyd George's request at a private luncheon the previous day (*vide supra*, p. 71).

³ Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant*, I, p. 421. Cf. M. P. A. Hankey to Admiral Wernys, March 7, 1919, Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris*, VI, p. 291.

⁴ Baker, R. S., *op. cit.*, III, pp. 198-205; I, p. 388; *The Times*, February 28, 1919.

⁵ The French asked for 270,000 tons of German ships: 5 battleships, 3 battle cruisers, 8 light cruisers, and 40 destroyers. After Scapa Flow, they demanded 5 capital ships, 6 light cruisers, and 32 destroyers (Temperley, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 147-153).

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the Council of Four of April 25, 1919. Admiral Hope asked whether destruction ought to be mentioned in the naval clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. Admiral Benson insisted that the text of the Treaty should leave no doubt as to the fate of the ships. In the discussion which followed, the position of the Allied representatives on this question was made quite plain. The American delegation was in favour of destruction because any other course would result in an increase of armaments. Lloyd George stated that he favoured destruction, but that there were French objections, and therefore decision ought to be postponed till later. Admiral de Bon renewed the French demand for some ships in order to offset the increase in the navies of the other Powers. Lloyd George recognized that there should be some compensation to France:

“He fully agreed that the French position in this matter ought to be considered. His idea was that France should have some of these ships, and sink a corresponding number of old ships, or, if unwilling to sink them, she might break them up, which Admiral Hope told him would be a business proposition.”¹

At the same meeting Admiral Hope brought up the question of submarines. The British Admiralty was especially opposed to the French claim for keeping submarines, because it viewed with particular favour the possibility of a universal interdict on submarine building and the abolition of all existing submarines to be carried out under guarantee of the League of Nations.² If this failed to be accepted, it advocated the extension of the laws of war to apply to submarines. At a meeting of the Supreme War Council of February 6, 1919, Lloyd George had said “it would be better to destroy as many of these pests as possible,”³ and now, on April 25th, he repeated that “he would like to destroy all submarines.”⁴ The American naval experts also recommended destruction of all submarines in the world and prohibition of

¹ Quoted in Baker, R. S., *op. cit.*, I, p. 388, and in Nixon, H. C., “Annotations to Part V, Section II, of the Treaty of Versailles,” November 26, 1919; Miller, *op. cit.*, XIX, pp. 227-228.

² Temperley, *op. cit.*, II, p. 143.

³ Miller, *op. cit.*, XIV, p. 227.

⁴ Nixon, *op. cit.*, pp. 227-228.

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any future building.¹ Wilson stated that "he was opposed to submarines altogether and hoped the time would come when they would be contrary to International Law; in his view they should be regarded as outlaws."² Admiral de Bon said that France would keep the submarines surrendered to her under the Armistice. No agreement could be reached on the disposal of enemy vessels and the problem was postponed for further consideration.

The problem was brought to a head when the German ships were scuttled by their crews at Scapa Flow on June 21, 1919. Ten battleships, 5 battle cruisers, 5 light cruisers, and 33 destroyers were sunk.³ The Allies were highly incensed over this action and insisted upon full reparation. Lloyd George feared that French opinion would hold Great Britain responsible for the sinking, interpreting it as a move of *perfidie Albion* to prevent the incorporation of German ships in the French Navy by presenting the Supreme Council with a *fait accompli*. In the meeting of the Council of Five of June 23, 1919, he asked for the opinion of the Allied Admiralties on the precautions they would have taken to prevent sabotage. Before action could be taken against the German Government, the situation was further complicated by news of the German burning of the French flags to be surrendered to France under the Treaty and by an intercepted telegram of the German Government instructing the two German generals in Silesia to organize local resistance against the cession of German territory to Poland, which resistance, although officially denounced by the German Government, would be sustained by them *sub rosa*. Linking these incidents with the sinking of Scapa Flow, Clemenceau demanded reparation in the form of the occupation of German territory.⁴

All the Allied Admiralties except the Japanese had stated they would have placed armed guards on the German ships to prevent

¹ United States Naval Advisory Staff, Paris, to the American Delegation, March 13, 1919, Baker, R. S., *op. cit.*, III, pp. 198-205. "Memorandum of Navy Planning Committee to Admiral Benson on terms that the United States should insist upon," Miller, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 101-107.

² Nixon, *op. cit.*, pp. 227-228.

³ 117 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 31-34.

⁴ Baker, R. S., *op. cit.*, I, p. 389.

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sabotage, and this implied criticism of the action of the British Admiralty which seemed to intimate connivance with the German action put Lloyd George in a difficult position. Nevertheless, both he and Wilson opposed the occupation of German territory as a violation of the Armistice and a resumption of war. The British believed that reparations must be appropriate to the act committed and, therefore, the reparations for Scapa Flow must be naval. As far as the vessels remaining were concerned, Great Britain renounced all claim to them. France might have all the ships which could be had. Since it was in a British port that the German Fleet was sunk, all that remained ought to go to France. Clemenceau let himself be dissuaded from occupying German territory; he accepted the principle of material reparations.

On June 25th Lloyd George proposed to the Council of Five to ask the Admirals' advice on the distribution of the German and Austrian vessels. Technical difficulties which would result from the incorporation of different units in the French Fleet led to modification of the position held by France. A compromise was arrived at. Ten submarines were handed over to France for her navy in December 1919. With the exception of 5 light cruisers, 1 flotilla leader, and 8 destroyers which were given to France and a similar number to Italy for incorporation in their fleets, and 6 torpedo boats allocated for police purposes to Poland, 6 to Brazil, 6 to Portugal, 7 to Roumania, 11 to the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, and 7 torpedo boats and 1 destroyer to Greece,¹ the remaining tonnage of the German and Austrian Fleets, including the tonnage of the ships sunk at Scapa Flow which the British undertook to include in their share, was divided among the Allied Powers on the basis of shipping lost during the war. The vessels were to be broken up. Great Britain received 70 per cent of the total tonnage, France and Italy 10 per cent, and the rest was distributed among the other Allies.²

¹ 128 *H.C. Debts.*, 5 s., col. 2055.

² Temperley, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 141-158; Seymour, *op. cit.*, IV, pp. 133-134; Miller, *op. cit.*, XV, pp. 184-185. The Supreme Council demanded 300,000 tons of dockyard material and five light cruisers in reparation for the Scapa Flow sinking. This was distributed among the Powers on the same basis as the ships had been.

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The Formulation of British Post-War Naval Policy

Anglo-American negotiations for an understanding on naval building had been temporarily postponed until after the Peace Conference. As negotiations at the Conference had shown, the British Government was unwilling to enter into a competition with the United States in naval building. Therefore, as soon as the Armistice was signed, it took steps to reduce the huge armada developed during the war, regardless of what was being done by the United States. The naval personnel was reduced from 407,000 at the time of the Armistice to about 150,000 in December 1919. Most of the formidable naval programme which was under way at the end of the war was cancelled at the Armistice¹ and work was continued at reduced speed on only a few vessels.² The work of scrapping old and superfluous ships was begun and continued steadily until, by April 1921, Great Britain had scrapped 38 battleships, 2 battle cruisers, 87 light cruisers, 300 destroyers and flotilla leaders, and 106 submarines.³ The British Fleet had been reduced to a peace footing, but was still superior in strength and numbers to the fleet of any other Power. This superiority was unchallenged in Europe. Great Britain had 42 modern capital ships at the end of the year 1918⁴ and the *Hood* was in process of completion. France and Italy, the next strongest European naval Powers, had six and five such ships respectively.⁵ In the West, however, the United States had begun laying down the

¹ At the time of the Armistice there were 1,005 ships ordered or under construction. By December 1919, 611 had been cancelled, 319 completed by October 31st, and 95 were to be completed (122 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1377).

At the Armistice, the British Navy was composed of 1,887 ships with a total tonnage of 3,136,000. Up to March 1928, 1,538 ships were scrapped, exclusive of trawlers and drifters, with a total tonnage of 2,139,515. New construction for that period was 56 ships with an aggregate tonnage of 332,515. (214 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 2145). Different figures are given in 210 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 2197.

² Ships and vessels still under construction on March 3, 1920, were: 1 battle cruiser (*Hood* started in 1916), 9 light cruisers, 2 flotilla leaders, 8 destroyers, 13 submarines, 2 aircraft carriers, and 5 auxiliary vessels (126 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 414).

³ 140 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1082.

⁴ 113 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1261.

⁵ Richmond, *Economy and Naval Security*, p. 19.

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navy that was to be "second to none." Although there was a temporary slackening in capital ship building after the United States entered the war, the United States had, when the peace was signed, 17 modern capital ships built and 4 building and 4 more planned. In the East, Great Britain's ally, Japan, had continued the expansion of her navy and, in 1919, had 11 capital ships built and 2 building.¹

In view of this situation, the position of the British Navy had to be carefully considered. There was in England after the Armistice a great deal of discussion as to what was to be the future policy of the Government with regard to the British Fleet. The war had brought about technical developments which not only threatened the supremacy of the battleship and the battle cruiser as the chief units of the fleet, but also necessitated careful consideration of the value of each ship in order to maintain as efficient a navy as possible. Moreover, the efforts of the British Dominions during the war and their contributions to the fighting forces made imperative a readjustment of the idea of Empire Defence and the military, naval, and air forces maintained therefor. The war had also produced a strained financial situation and utmost economy in all governmental expenditure was necessary. This economy was to be even more essential to a sound financial position as years went by and the social services of the British Government, unemployment insurance, housing, etc., became more and more a drain on public funds. The British Government, therefore, was obliged to evolve a policy for the Navy which would still keep it on a standard of fighting efficiency adequate to protect British interests at home and abroad without provoking any competition in naval building dangerous to the maintenance of peace and which would not call for such huge expenditure as to jeopardize the soundness of British governmental finance.

The war was no sooner over than the Admiralty undertook the consideration of future policy. Of fundamental importance

¹ Richmond, *Economy and Naval Security*, p. 19. Cf. Hurd, Archibald, "Shall we Suffer Eclipse by Sea? American Progress," *Fortnightly Review*, 107, pp. 849 ff.

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was the future of the capital ship,¹ for, as the chief unit of the fleet, it had formed the principal object of naval competition in the past and its fate was bound to influence profoundly the course of post-war naval building. The development of torpedoes and mines during the war had shaken the faith of naval experts in the power of the capital ship. A study of the way in which German torpedo craft turned the tide of battle at Jutland and the subsequent development of the flying torpedo boats have led many writers on naval affairs to proclaim the doom of the capital ship and predict a bright future for torpedo craft. Lord Fisher and Sir Percy Scott both maintained that the battleship was doomed by the development of submarine and aircraft.² Admiral Sims, U.S.N., meant the same thing when he stated that the safest place for American battleships in case of war was as far up the Mississippi River as they would go, or again "that battleships are not worth the powder to blow them to hell."³

In spite of this general opinion, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Walter Long, stated in December 1919 that the Board of the Admiralty was not prepared to adopt the view that the day of the capital ship was over.⁴ It had stopped all building of such ships at the Armistice, except the battle cruiser *Hood* which was begun in 1916, and planned for no new capital ships before it should have made a thorough investigation of the situation. In

¹ Capital ship is an old term applied to the main ships of the battle fleet, now put back into current usage to include both battleships and battle cruisers. The main difference between these ships is mostly one of proportion between speed and gun power. Thus, the *Russell*, a battleship of 14,000 tons, had a speed of 18 knots and a broadside weight of fire of 4,000 lb., while the *Drake*, a battle cruiser of slightly over 14,000 tons, had a speed of 23 knots and a broadside weight of fire of 1,560 lb. (Richmond, *op. cit.*, p. 45).

² Before the war Sir Percy Scott stated that the advent of the submarine had doomed the battleship. The war, however, showed this prediction to be false. After the war Sir Percy Scott held the same views about the fate of the battleship, this time due to development in aircraft (*cf.* Bywater, Hector, "Limitation of Naval Armaments," *Atlantic Monthly*, 129, p. 261; *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1923, p. 85; Hurd, "Is the Battleship Doomed!" *Fortnightly Review*, 107, pp. 222 ff.; *The Times*, September 12, October 31, December 12, 1919, December 9, 1920).

³ Quoted in Hurd, "The British Fleet Dips its Ensign," *Fortnightly Review*, 111, p. 396.

⁴ 122 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1382.

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a conversation with Lord Riddell on December 18, 1920, Lloyd George said:

"It would be a great mistake for the country to engage in a big ship-building programme at the moment. Naval construction is in a fluid state. We must ascertain how best we can spend our money. It would be ruinous to make a mistake in policy."¹

Accordingly, in his speech on National Expenditure, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, stated that the Cabinet would not permit any more expenditure on capital ships until their value and usefulness had been examined. He announced that the Committee of Imperial Defence would institute an exhaustive investigation of the whole question of naval strength as affected by the latest developments in naval warfare.² This Committee met on December 15, 1920, to discuss the future of the Navy and its relations to Empire Defence. It appointed a Sub-Committee consisting of Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Churchill, Mr. Long, Sir Robert Horne, Sir Eric Geddes, and Admiral Beatty to collect evidence on the value of the battleship, which evidence was to be presented to the Imperial Cabinet for consideration.³

The conflict between the capital ship and the torpedo is an old one. The aim of submarine devices has been to attack the enemy vessel in its most vulnerable spot, under the water-line, where damage to the hull is likely to prove fatal. Robert Fulton worked from 1780 to 1815 to find a method of exploding a charge under water against the hull of a ship. The difficulty lay in getting the torpedo to the ship. At first, this difficulty proved insuperable and the torpedo was merely a submarine mine exploding upon contact.⁴ Later, the explosive charge was fixed at the end of a

¹ *Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After*, p. 255.

² 135 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 2507.

³ *The Times*, December 1, 1920, January 3, 29, 1921.

⁴ Submarine mines became distinguished from torpedoes after 1870 and entered into a development of their own which was highly speeded up by the World War. Of great defensive value, they were used effectively by the Germans in the beginning of the war and also by the Allies in the end. All avenues of escape for German submarines were closed by the use of extensive fields of depth mines laid across the Strait of Dover and the North Sea from Norway to Orkney (Walker, Captain A. H., R.N., "Mines, Minelaying, and Mine-sweeping," *Encyclopædia Britannica* (14th ed.), XV, pp. 533-538).

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long pole which was rammed against the ship under water. It was in this way that, during the American Civil War, Lieutenant Cushing destroyed the Confederate ironclad *Albemarle*. It was not until 1864 that an effective mobile torpedo, the Luppis-Whitehead, was produced. The problem of the torpedo, of getting it to the ship, still remained the same in spite of this development. Torpedo boats came into use which would carry the torpedo near enough to the warship to enable successful launching and aiming. The first torpedo boat, the *Lightning*, was introduced in the British Navy in 1877. It was a ship of 34 tons displacement with a speed of 19 knots and armed with the Whitehead torpedo. The size and effectiveness of these boats increased as developments were made in the speed of the torpedo and the distance from which it could be fired effectively, and in the method of launching.¹

The threat to the warship from this new engine of war was deemed to be so great that there was a movement for abandoning construction of such ships. In 1886, the French Admiral Aube, very much like Sir Percy Scott before the war, was preaching a crusade against the battleship of the day, declaring that the torpedo had rendered it obsolete.² When laying down the naval programme which was to achieve the Two-Power Standard for the British Navy, on March 7, 1889, Lord George Hamilton, First Lord of the Admiralty, said:

"I had hoped some two years ago that the *Nile* and *Trafalgar* would be the last battleships laid down in this country. It then appeared as if there was to be a general cessation of armour-clad building, and that

¹ The Luppis-Whitehead torpedo weighed 300 lb. with 18 lb. of dynamite and travelled a short distance at 6 miles per hour. A modern torpedo travels at 36 miles per hour for 7,000 to 8,000 yards and carries 500 lb. of tri-nitrotoluene (T.N.T.) (Walker, Captain A. H., R.N., "Torpedoes," *Encyclopædia Britannica* (14th ed.), XXII, pp. 300-302). According to Sir George Thurston, some torpedoes do 45 knots for a range of 15,000 yards with 700 lb. of high explosives ("The Capital Ship of the Future," *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1933, pp. 91-92).

² Kenworthy, Lieutenant-Commander J. M., *New Wars : New Weapons*, p. 51.

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for reasons not far to seek, torpedo boats had come into use and naval officers were inclined greatly to exaggerate the effect of the change. The result was that the second European Naval Power, France, practically suspended her armour-clad building, and other nations followed her example; but, since then, owing in part to the development of quick-firing guns, and partly to the invention of new explosives, an impetus has been given to battleship building.”¹

As the torpedo developed and the methods of getting it to the ship improved, there was, after an initial time-lag, a corresponding development of the means to offset it. The achievement of the quick-firing gun made it extremely dangerous, if not impossible, for the torpedo boat to approach near enough to the ship to launch the torpedo. The torpedo boat, therefore, operated at night. The torpedo-boat gunboats and the torpedo-boat destroyers were then brought into use. The first torpedo-boat destroyers were introduced in 1892 and were faster and of greater tonnage than the torpedo boat they were to attack.² Faster and smaller than the battleship, and hence harder to hit, they coped most effectively with the menace of the torpedo boat. Destroyers were from the first equipped with torpedo tubes, and they gradually became the chief torpedo craft as well as the most effective anti-torpedo craft.³ As a result, destroyers were attached to the battle fleet as necessary auxiliaries. In fleet action, the functions of destroyers are thus twofold, offensive and defensive. “Their functions,” explains Captain Edward A. Altham, R.N., “are to attack the enemy’s battle fleet under cover of the fire of their own battleships, or by taking advantage of low visibility or smoke screens to counter the attacks of the enemy flotilla, by going out to meet them before they can manœuvre into position to launch their torpedoes; and to form an anti-submarine and anti-aircraft

¹ 3 *Hansard*, cccxxxiii, col. 1170.

² The first destroyers of the British Navy, *Havoc*, *Hornet*, and *Daring*, were ships of 275 tons, capable of 27 knots and armed with one 12-pr. and three torpedo tubes.

³ As torpedo craft, however, destroyers are becoming as obsolete as the torpedo boats they displaced. There were at least 130 destroyers at the Battle of Jutland with 500 tubes, yet they did not score more than six or seven hits (Bywater, *Navies and Nations*, pp. 56-57).

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screen to protect the battle fleet against these forms of attack, when necessary.”¹

The effectiveness of the torpedo-boat destroyer in defending the battleship from the attacks of surface torpedo craft brought to the fore once again the essential difficulty of the torpedo, the difficulty of getting it to the ship. As the torpedo could not be carried to the ship on the surface, attempts were made to carry it under water. The development of the submarine offered an ideal carrier for the torpedo.² Unseen, it could creep up on its prey to within striking distance. This weapon came into its own during the World War. The torpedo-boat destroyer, however, proved as efficient against the submarine torpedo boat as it had been against the surface torpedo boat. Where it could not see, it listened. Armed with ram, depth charge, and gun, the destroyer could pursue an unseen prey at forty miles per hour. Submarines also were able to combat other submarines. Admiral Sims expressed the opinion that “the war developed the fact that the most deadly enemy of the submarine is the submarine itself.”³ The protective value of submarine and destroyer, and the fact that battleships have been fitted with bulges which keep the explosion away from vital centres and that their hulls have been divided into small water-tight bulkheads which can be closed in case of damage to any part of the hull, has rendered the submarine comparatively innocuous. From this, it is evident that the submarine torpedo boat, while it has profoundly influenced naval warfare, cannot as yet put an end to the battle fleet.⁴

¹ “Destroyers,” *Encyclopædia Britannica* (14th ed.), VII, p. 266. Cf. Thurston, Sir George, “Destroyers of To-day,” *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1927, pp. 81-90; Eardly-Wilmot, Rear-Admiral S., “Is the Submarine Doomed?” *Nineteenth Century and After*, 138, p. 346.

² It will be remembered that this was foreseen at the First Hague Conference of 1899, when it was proposed to prohibit the use of submarine torpedo boats (*vide supra*, p. 50).

³ Sims, Rear-Admiral William Snowden, *Victory at Sea*, p. 225. On page 224, he shows that Allied destroyers, 500 in number, destroyed only 34 German submarines. Other surface vessels, trawlers, and yachts, 3,000 in all, sank 31 German submarines. The 100 Allied submarines sank 20 German submarines (*ibid.*, Chap. VIII.)

⁴ During the war the Grand Fleet operated in the North Sea infested with

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The failure of the submarine as the able carrier of torpedoes which it was at first thought to be was offset by the development of the aerial torpedo boat. Armed with both bomb and torpedo, aeroplanes appear to be the most dangerous foe of the capital ship. The post-war developments in this arm and the greater accuracy achieved in the dropping of bombs and the launching of torpedoes have added to the danger to the capital ship. Here, as in the case of the other torpedo craft, the threat was met by increased defensive armaments of the capital ship, in the form of thicker deck armour, and by increased counter-offensive armaments, in the form of rapid firing anti-aircraft guns which aim at keeping flying torpedo boats at a distance too great effectively to drop bombs or launch torpedoes and in the form of flying torpedo-boat destroyers, *i.e.* fighting planes. Flotillas of flying torpedo-boat destroyers based on aircraft carriers have been added to the battle fleet, and capital ships and cruisers have been fitted with catapults which make possible the launching of aeroplanes from the deck. Whether these defensive measures against the flying torpedo boat are sufficient remains to be proved in naval action. All experiments so far conducted in the bombing of capital ships by aircraft have been conducted on stationary or slow-moving targets and without counter-offensive measures being taken.

In 1921 the Joint Army and Navy Board of the United States carried on bombing experiments on the ex-German warships and others. On June 30, 1921, twenty naval and military aeroplanes made an attack on *U.S.S. Iowa*, which was steered by wireless at 5 knots per hour. These experiments resulted in only one hit out of 80 bombs dropped.¹ Later the former German cruiser *Frankfurt* was sunk by United States airmen in 26 minutes, using 78 bombs and scoring 12 direct hits.² The *Ostfriesland* was bombed and was sunk in 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ minutes by two one-ton bombs which dropped just under the bow and produced the same effect as if the ship had struck a powerful mine.³ In spite of this and similar

torpedo craft, yet no battleship or battle cruiser of the fleet was torpedoed (*cf.* Bywater, *op. cit.*, Chap. II; *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1921-1922, pp. 85, 119).

¹ *The Times*, July 4, 1921.

² *Ibid.*, July 19, 20, 1921.

³ 187 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 495-496; 152 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 309; *The Times*, July 22, 1921.

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results which at first glance seem conclusive the Joint Board, in the General Conclusion of its Report to the Secretary of the Navy, stated, "The development of aircraft instead of furnishing an economical instrument of war leading to the abolition of the battleship has but added to the complexity of naval warfare."¹ The Board reached the conclusion that the battleship was still the backbone of the fleet. Other experiments conducted later demonstrated the substance of this claim.

The United States Navy towed out to sea the incomplete battleship *Washington* which was due to be scrapped under the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922. After mooring it unattended, they submitted it to various experiments to test its vulnerability. They dropped two 2,000-lb bombs near the ship without producing the same results as similar attack had accomplished on the *Ostfriesland*. They tried two modern torpedo warheads of 400 lb. and determined that the ship could resist eight torpedoes not hitting at the same place. A 2,000-lb. depth charge was also tried without result. An aeroplane was sent up and dropped eight 14-inch shells weighing 1,140-lb. but failed to hit the ship. A shell from a second aeroplane struck the deck after the fourth try, but the shell did not penetrate. The ship was finally sunk by fourteen hits from the 14-inch guns of the American battleships. British experience was similar. Air experiments conducted on the pre-dreadnought battleship *Agamemnon* on August 11, 1922, yielded impressive results for close bombing, but very slight success for bombing from a height of 8,000 feet.² An experiment similar to the one performed with the U.S.S. *Washington* was conducted on the British *Monarch*, which, after being bombed from the air and then shelled by light cruisers with 6-inch guns, was finally sunk by 15-inch guns on battleships operating from a distance of ten miles.³

¹ Quoted in Buell, *op. cit.*, p. 237, note.

² *The Times*, August 12, 1922.

³ *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1926, pp. 107-108; *The Times*, January 22, February 19, 1925. The *Monarch*, due to be scrapped under the Washington Treaty, had one side reconstructed to represent the most recent designs in underwater construction devised to protect against bombs which

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In spite of popular excitement due to the development of aircraft, the Board of the Admiralty had not, in 1919, decided to abandon the battleship. This stand was identical with that taken in the United States and Japan where the naval building programmes included many such ships. The Committee on Imperial Defence examined the question of the capital ship and reached the conclusion, which was shared by the Board of the Admiralty, that the technical developments of the war had in no way changed the position of the capital ship as the main unit of the battle fleet. This opinion was laid down plainly in the "Notes on Naval Policy" added to the "Statement of the First Lord Explanatory of the Naval Estimates for 1920-1921":

"10. In our opinion, the capital ship remains the unit on which sea-power is built up. So far from the late war having shown that the capital ship is doomed, it has, on the contrary, proved the necessity for that type. On the German side, the whole of the submarine campaign against merchant vessels was built up on the power of the High Sea Fleet. On the British side the enemy submarines in no way interfered with the movements of capital ships in carrying out operations; destroyer screens, new methods of attack, and altered tactical movements defeated the submarine.

"11. Nor at present could the Board of Admiralty subscribe to the statement that aircraft have doomed the capital ships. Aircraft are certainly of the highest importance in naval tactics, as regards reconnaissance, torpedo attack, and artillery observation, but their role in the present circumstances is that of an auxiliary and not of the substitute for the capital ship."¹

This decision was put into practice when the British Government decided to proceed with the construction of four battle cruisers in the autumn of 1921.²

act as mines when dropped near the ship. A charge of 2,000 lb., representing a bomb of about 4,000 lb., was exploded next to it. The First Lord of the Admiralty would not give the result of the experiment (215 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 357-358, 1147-1148).

¹ Cmd. 619 of 1920, p. 4.

² For discussion on the question of the maintenance of the capital ship, *vide* Bywater, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31; Buell, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-238; Kenworthy, *op. cit.*, *passim*; Spanner, E. F., *Armaments and the Non-Combatant*; paper delivered by Sir Eustace Tennyson d'Eyncourt at the Institution of Naval Architects, Paris, July 4, 1922, *The Times*, July 5, 1922; Hurd, A., "Great

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A second problem arising in the formulation of a naval policy after the war was the participation of the Dominions in the responsibilities of Imperial Defence. It had been the custom of Great Britain to provide for the internal and external defence of the colonies until such time as they should be in position to protect themselves. After this, Great Britain would only undertake to keep open communications between herself and the colonies in war and peace. In 1862 the House of Commons invited the autonomous colonies to look after their internal security and contribute to their external defence. This invitation to share the burdens of external defence met with no response, and, although the Imperial Conferences of 1887, 1897, 1902, 1907, and 1911 dealt with the problem of Imperial Defence, there was little enthusiasm among the Dominions to assume a proportionate share of the expense.¹ In the 'eighties both New Zealand and Australia contributed annually to the cost of maintaining the British Squadron in the Far East. After 1902 the annual contribution of Australia was £200,000 and of New Zealand, £100,000. In 1909, after the subsidiary Imperial Conference of that year, Australia and Canada began building their own navies while New Zealand presented a new battle cruiser to Great Britain.² In 1910 Admiral Sir Reginald Henderson, asked by Australia for his advice, recommended that she build a fleet of 52 combatant vessels at a cost of £38,000,000 to be completed by 1933.³ In 1914 the Royal Australian Navy consisted of 1 battle cruiser, Ships or —? A Footnote to the 'Times' Correspondence," the *Fortnightly Review*, 109, p. 240; "Is the Battleship Doomed?" *ibid.*, 107, p. 222; Bridge, Admiral Sir Cyprian A. G., "The Overrated Submarine," *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 93, p. 658; "The Capital Ship: Is it Doomed?" *ibid.*, 89, p. 307; Eardley-Wilmot, Rear-Admiral S., "Is the Submarine Doomed?" *ibid.*, 88, p. 346.

¹ *Vide* Chevallier, Jean-Jacques, *L'évolution de l'Empire Britannique*, pp. 239-251.

² At that Conference Great Britain decided to create a Pacific Fleet composed of three units each of 1 battle cruiser, 3 light cruisers, 6 destroyers, and 3 submarines to be based in India, China, and Australia. The Australian unit was under the control of Australia and was called the Royal Australian Navy (*ibid.*, p. 248. Cf. Keith, Arthur Berriedale, *War Government of the British Dominions*, pp. 132-135; Hythe, Viscount, "The Dominions and Empire Defence," *The Naval Annual*, 1913, pp. 201 ff.).

³ Bywater, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-78.

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4 light cruisers, 9 small vessels, and about 9,000 officers and men.¹ New Zealand was still paying annual contributions to the Royal Navy, as were India and South Africa, who were paying £100,000 and £85,000 respectively. Canada had her own navy consisting of two obsolete cruisers and a few gunboats.

After the war the position had to be reconsidered. The Dominions had contributed materially to the success of military and naval operations and they had been granted the right of consultation in the conduct of foreign affairs which affect the whole Empire. At the Imperial Conference of 1917 it was decided that Dominion participation in foreign affairs and Empire Defence should be considered at an Imperial Conference to be held after the war. The problem of naval defence of the Empire had changed since the collapse of Germany. The most vulnerable point of the Empire was no longer the United Kingdom but the Pacific possessions. The necessity for Empire naval defence was thus increased and with it the need for a unified and highly mobile Imperial Navy under central control. In view of the straitened financial situation of Great Britain, it was hoped by the Admiralty that the Dominions would contribute more proportionately to the huge cost of the Navy. At the end of 1918 some of the Dominions demanded the advice of the British Admiralty as to their future naval needs. Admiral of the Fleet Lord Jellicoe was therefore sent on a tour of the Dominions in February 1919.²

¹ War Office, *Military Effort of the British Empire*, p. 761. It nearly doubled during the war. In 1919 the Royal Australian Navy consisted of 1 battle cruiser, 5 light cruisers, 1 flotilla leader, 11 destroyers, 6 submarines, 3 sloops, etc., 33 ships in all.

² Admiral Lord Jellicoe's instructions were: "To advise the Dominion authorities whether in the light of the experience of the war the scheme for naval organization which has been adopted, or may be in contemplation, requires reconsideration, either from the point of view of the efficiency of that organization for meeting local needs, or from that of ensuring the greatest possible homogeneity and co-operation between all the naval forces of the Empire; and should the Dominion authorities desire to consider how far it is possible for the Dominions to take a more effective share in the naval defence of the Empire, to give assistance from a naval point of view in drawing up the scheme for consideration" (Jellicoe, "Naval Policy of the Empire," *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1926, p. 63. Cf. *Round Table*, March 1920, pp 424-425).

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He recommended a British Pacific Fleet of 8 battleships, 8 battle cruisers, 10 light cruisers, 40 destroyers, 30 submarines, and all necessary auxiliaries,¹ and fixed the shares of this fleet which should be contributed by Australia and New Zealand respectively. He advised that this fleet be based at Singapore. These recommendations were submitted to the Dominions and had not been acted upon when the Imperial Conference of June 1921 met. In spite of this lack of response, the Admiralty bore in mind the report of Lord Jellicoe and the requirements of naval defence of all the Dominions when it decided upon the naval policy of the British Empire.

The third factor which the Admiralty had to consider in formulating British post-war naval policy was the pressing need for economy. The war entailed such enormous expenditures that there was strong public agitation after the Armistice for immediate retrenchment. The total deadweight debt of Great Britain increased from £649,770,000 on March 31, 1914, to £7,831,744,000 on March 31, 1920.² Increase in the internal debt alone, which in 1914 amounted to 9.63 per cent of budget receipts, in 1919-1920 had risen to 21.90 per cent, and this proportion continued to rise steadily. In 1925-1926 it was 36.42 per cent.³ The increase in national income since 1914 was not sufficient to offset the rise in national deadweight indebtedness, for the ratio of national debt to national income was 28.26 in 1913 and 202.63 in 1923.⁴ The slump which followed the short-lived boom of 1920 brought out more emphatically than ever before the absolute necessity of retrenchment. The huge cost of the war and the financial inheritance which had to be met out of current receipts, the growing tide of unemployment, the gradual stagnation of trade and industries, the rapidly falling price level, the growing cost of social reforms promised during the war or made necessary by it, all these factors combined to make it imperative for the Government to cut down

¹ Bywater, *op. cit.*, Chap. VII; Keith, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-145; *The Times*, December 12, 1919.

² Cmd. 2800 of 1927, pp. 24-25.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴ This ratio was 210.00 at the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1818 (*ibid.*, p. 235).

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its expenses as much as possible. The fighting services after having had money lavished on them during the war were the first to be considered for immediate retrenchment. In 1919 the Government gave instructions that the Estimates of the Fighting Services must be based upon "the assumption that no great war was to be anticipated within the next ten years, although provision should be made for the possible expansion of trained units in case of an emergency arising."¹

Bearing in mind the essential importance of sea-power to security and prosperity of the British Empire, the Admiralty therefore determined to proceed on lines which it believed would provide for the vital requirements of sea-power and, at the same time, observe a rigid economy. It had also to consider the strength of the British Navy in relation to the strength of other navies. The British Government had already abandoned supremacy of the Far Eastern Seas in favour of Japan when it signed the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, which, as modified in 1911, was still in force. The Japanese Navy was therefore not to be considered when estimating the relative strength of the British Navy. There remained the American Navy. It had been the policy of the British Government never to compete with the Americans in naval building,² and this policy was very strongly emphasized at Paris in 1919. As the strategic importance of the West Indies had

¹ Quoted in the First Interim Report of the Geddes Committee on National Expenditure, Cmd. 1581 of 1922, p. 6. Lloyd George expressed the same idea at dinner on November 9, 1919. He said "he thought there would not be another big war, at any rate for ten years, and that meanwhile we could consolidate our position" (*Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary at the Peace Conference and After*, p. 140).

² Before the war the United States was sometimes included in the computation of the Two-Power Standard. On March 18, 1912, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, in introducing the Navy Estimates, explained this fact. Since the strictly European application of the Two-Power Standard would allow only a slight superiority over the German Fleet, in order to justify a larger navy with marked superiority over this Fleet, "it has become customary to extend the Two-Power Standard so as to include the United States of America, and thereby I think the Two-Power Standard has lost much of its good sense and its reality." There was no desire to use the American Navy for comparison. This was shown by Mr. Churchill's proposal for the adoption of a standard of 60 per cent superiority in dreadnoughts over Germany (35 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1555).

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decreased with their decrease in commercial importance since the War of Jenkins' Ear, command of American waters had ceased to be a necessity to Great Britain. Any formula would be acceptable which would satisfy the Americans, and at the same time would maintain British supremacy in the Near East, the Mediterranean, the long route to India and the South Pacific Ocean. Substantial equality by which the Americans remained masters of their own waters without disturbing essential British interests was the ideal solution.¹

The Board of the Admiralty, therefore, decided "to suspend production for the time being and concentrate largely on assimilating the lessons of the war, the fleet being reduced to minimum requirements as regards both personnel and material."² At the same time it agreed upon the future naval policy in the matter of relative strength, which was put forth by the First Lord, Mr. Walter Long, on March 17, 1920. Introducing the Navy Estimates, Mr. Long said, "I believe it is a fact that the naval policies of all past Governments, whichever party they represented, have, at least, included this common principle, that our Navy should not be inferior in strength to the navy of any other Power, and to this principle the present Government firmly adheres."³ This

¹ In 1913 Viscount Hythe wrote: "The Chinese Battle Squadron has disappeared. The Japanese Navy is undisputed mistress of the Eastern Seas. . . . In the West Indies, in the waters of South America, and other regions of the world, where we have vast commercial interests, the British Flag is hardly ever shown, and then only by a small cruiser" (*The Naval Annual*, 1913, p. 202).

When it is remembered that in the war of 1812-1814, between the United States and Great Britain, it took 83 British vessels to defeat the 14 American vessels and the privateers operating with them, it becomes clear that Great Britain did not hold the mastery of American seas during the nineteenth century, as she had only a few cruisers in these waters throughout all the century. The policy of Great Britain has always been to leave the Americas out of consideration. Mr. Baldwin stated in the House of Commons on June 2, 1930, "We always based our standards on European standards, and what might be necessary for our defence in any conceivable circumstances so far as our narrow seas and certain narrow communications were concerned. I want the House to bear that in mind, and particularly that, never as long as I was head of the Government, did we trouble ourselves as to what America had built, was building, or might build. We proceeded with absolute independence in framing our programmes so far as she was concerned" (239 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1795).

² "Notes on Naval Policy," Cmd. 619 of 1920, p. 4.

³ 126 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 2301.

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was no departure from the past, for the "One-Power Standard" had always been the minimum standard advocated when the naval policy of Great Britain had been made the subject of mature consideration.

Since the days of Lord George Hamilton the British Government had been building on the Two-Power Standard interpreted to mean 10 per cent more than the strength of the next two European naval Powers—France and Russia. This was to ensure British supremacy in the Near East, the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, and the route to India. Immediately before the war Winston Churchill had secured the adoption of a standard calling for 60 per cent greater strength in dreadnoughts than the next naval Power, in this case Germany. The one principle which runs through all these years is that Great Britain must maintain the supremacy of the Near Seas, the Mediterranean, and the route to India. The One-Power Standard as expressed by Mr. Long did not abandon the principles previously laid down. The Two-Power Standard had applied only to Europe, and Great Britain was still free to maintain the Two-Power Standard in Europe. All the new "Standard" announced by Mr. Long meant was that Great Britain would not insist on a navy superior to that of the United States. In a meeting between Grey, Haldane, and House, in July 1919, Grey expressed his views on the subject of Anglo-American naval relations. According to House, he maintained

"that in no circumstances would Great Britain build against the United States no matter how many keels we laid. However, England would hold herself free to build against any European Powers in any quantity that seemed to her best. On the other hand, the United States could exercise her own judgment about building."¹

The post-war naval policy of Great Britain followed this view. The British Government accepted equality in naval armaments with the United States, but it insisted on maintaining the Two-Power Standard in Europe.

The One-Power Standard admitted of great variations in

¹ Colonel House to the President, London, July 30, 1919, Seymour, *op. cit.*, IV, pp. 510-513.

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interpretation. Mr. Long and the Coalition Government undoubtedly meant that they accepted parity with the United States. This was the view which Lord Lee of Fareham, First Lord of the Admiralty, expressed in an address at the banquet of the Society of Naval Architects on March 16, 1921.¹ In the "Statement of the First Lord Explanatory of the Navy Estimates for 1921-1922," the naval policy of the Government was announced as the maintenance of the One-Power Standard defined as it had been defined by Mr. Long, that the Navy "should not be inferior in strength to that of any other Power."² This standard, in the view of the Admiralty, demanded "that the Navy should be maintained in sufficient strength to ensure the safety of the British Empire and its sea communications as against any other Power."³ This definition implied more than mere parity; it was parity or anything over that the maintenance of security and sea communications might require.

The resolution on Imperial Defence adopted by the Imperial Cabinet meeting of June-August 1921 stated that "equality with the naval strength of any other Power is a minimum standard" for the safety of the Empire.⁴ The official interpretation of the Government may be taken from His Majesty's speech proroguing Parliament on November 10, 1921. Speaking of the Imperial Conference, His Majesty said, "It was unanimously decided that the naval strength of the Empire should be equal to that of any other Power."⁵ When judged by deeds, however, the parity of the Coalition Government was parity in battle fleets and not in auxiliary vessels and commerce-protecting craft. The interpretation of the Conservative Government of Mr. Baldwin of 1924-1929 was the same, although Mr. Bridgeman did indicate at the Geneva Naval Conference of 1927 that the British Government would accept parity with the United States in all classes of ships provided the total tonnage was high enough to meet British needs in cruisers. The interpretation of the One-Power Standard to cover all classes of ships, after contributing to the failure of the

¹ 139 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1766-1767.

³ Quoted in Cmd. 1581 of 1922, p. 10.

⁵ 148 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 743.

² Cmd. 1191 of 1921, p. 2.

⁴ Cmd. 1474 of 1921, p. 6.

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Geneva Naval Conference, was confirmed at London in 1930 in the Five-Power Naval Treaty.

The Washington Conference, November 1921–February 1922

When laying down the principle of the naval policy of Great Britain, the First Lord of the Admiralty had been careful to make it clear that it was not the purpose of the British Government to compete with the United States in naval building. The competition, he said, would be in disarmament.¹ When the British Government adopted the policy of the One-Power Standard it was forced to take into consideration the naval building activities of the United States and the growing competition with Japan. While Great Britain had stopped all building of capital ships at the Armistice and no such ship had been laid down since the *Hood* in 1916, the United States had proceeded to lay down fifteen capital ships between 1918 and 1921. In July 1920 the Japanese Diet decided to complete the 8 : 8 : 8 programme by authorizing construction of eight capital ships and many auxiliary craft.² This called forth strong reaction in the United States and precipitated a race in naval building between the two nations. Great uneasiness was felt in Great Britain as she was bound to be involved in this competition if the British Government were to maintain the One-Power Standard. In February 1921 the Government announced the building of four super-Hoods, to be laid down in the autumn, to prevent the British Navy falling too far behind in capital ships and particularly in post-Jutland ships.³ In the

¹ 126 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 2301.

² Bywater, Hector, "The Limitation of Naval Armaments," *Atlantic Monthly*, 129, p. 260. The 8-8 programme was laid down at the end of the Russian War for the building of a fleet composed of 8 battleships and 8 battle cruisers. Another squadron of 8 post-Jutland ships was added to the programme in 1920 (Buell, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-144; Hosono, Gunji, *International Disarmament*, pp. 162-164).

³ Cf. 139 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1763-1879, *passim*; 130 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1232. When pressed in the House of Commons on the continuance of work on the super-Hoods, the Government answered that the invitation of President Harding did not change the situation, as it was unlikely that the Conference would do more than reach an agreement on future building, without scrapping ships already built or building (144 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1452). On March 16,

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Debates on the Estimates of March 16, 1922, the Parliamentary Secretary of the Admiralty, Mr. Amery, made it clear that American-Japanese building competition was the cause of the Government's decision to build the battle cruisers. "Those formidable new developments were not aimed at us. . . . Consequently without directly joining in any competition, we were compelled to abandon, and to abandon with reluctance, our policy of cessation from construction."¹

In view of the fact that the British Fleet was still superior to the American Fleet, the British Government could not call a naval conference for fear this would be interpreted as a move to maintain the supremacy of the British Navy, and, through failure, lead to a new and more disastrous competition. Nevertheless, the Government did abstain from further building and tried to bring about a conference, members of the Government stating on many occasions that if the United States would call one they would gladly co-operate.² The fight over the League

1922, the Parliamentary Secretary of the Admiralty, Mr. Amery, stated, "We were not sanguine enough to imagine that it [Washington Conference] could affect our first four or even first eight replacement ships, that it could, in fact, bring about a return to that complete naval holiday which we had been so reluctant to forego" (151 *H.C. Deb.*, 5 s., col. 2411).

¹ *Ibid.*

² Cf. First Lord Lee's speech of March 16, 1921, at the Royal Nautical Architects' Society Banquet, *The Times*, March 17, 1921; Lloyd George's and Mr. Hughes's speeches at the opening meeting of the Imperial Cabinet, June 21, 1921. Cmd. 1474 of 1921, pp. 13, 20.

According to Lord Riddell, on July 10, 1921, he had a talk with Lloyd George in which Lloyd George explained "that President Harding was about to convene a Conference on the limitation of armaments and that the announcement was to be sent out to-night by the American Government. He said the idea had originated in the Imperial Conference, and that on behalf of the Conference he had addressed letters to the United States, Japan, and China asking for their views. It was important that, while President Harding should not be robbed of the honour of acting with promptitude, the public both here and in America should appreciate the part which had been played by the British Empire." Lord Riddell's comment in his diary was: "This is one of the best things L. G. has done. There is no doubt that Harding's action is due to his initiative." Wickham Steed explained that the American Government took the initiative after Lloyd George's letter and that the American Ambassador delivered the invitation of his Government at the same moment when Lloyd George and the Dominion Prime Ministers were contemplating issuing an invitation (*Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After*, pp. 305-306; Wickham Steed, *Through Thirty Years*, II, pp. 362-364).

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of Nations carried on by the Wilson administration and the presidential election of 1920 prevented the United States Government taking any action before the inauguration of the new President. In the fall of 1920 Senator Borah introduced a resolution in the Senate demanding an international understanding between the United States, Great Britain, and Japan on naval budgets and building programmes. This resolution was embodied in the Naval Supply Bill of 1921 and was passed by 74 votes to 0 in the Senate and 330 to 4 in the House of Representatives. President Harding, in his inaugural address and in his message to Congress of April 12, 1921, declared that the United States was ready to "recommend a way to approximate disarmament and relieve the crushing burdens of military and naval establishments."¹ This declaration met with approval both in Great Britain and Japan and in July the State Department announced that enquiries had been made of the principal Allied Powers as to whether they would participate in a conference for the limitation of armaments and the discussion of Far Eastern problems. The replies to this enquiry were so favourable that on August 11, 1921, President Harding issued a formal invitation to the Governments of France, Great Britain, Japan, and Italy to participate in a Conference at Washington on November 11, 1921, "on the subject of Limitation of Armament, in connection with which Pacific and Far Eastern questions will also be discussed."² The Governments of China, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Portugal were also invited to participate in the discussion of Far Eastern Affairs.

The British Government accepted the invitation with warm enthusiasm, and on November 4, 1921, the House of Commons adopted a resolution *nemine contradicente* approving of the Washington Conference. It was resolved

"That this House warmly approves of the meeting of the International Conference at Washington and trusts that a supreme effort will be made to arrive at such a measure of agreement as will secure a

¹ *The Times*, March 5, 1921.

² *Conference on the Limitation of Armaments*, p. 6.

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substantial and progressive reduction of the crushing burden of armaments.”¹

In spite of the sincere desire of the British Government to avoid a naval building competition with the United States, it was determined not to sacrifice Great Britain's predominant position. This had been evident in the discussions on Wilson's Fourteen Points in the Supreme War Council. Throughout the Anglo-American conversations on naval building at the Peace Conference the British delegates had maintained the need of Great Britain to predominate at sea. Lord Riddell reports Lloyd George as saying, on January 1, 1921, that “Harding's speech on American naval aspirations made him feel that he would pawn his shirt rather than allow America to dominate the seas.”² Speaking of the Washington Conference one day in the week commencing July 18, 1921, Lloyd George told Lord Riddell

“that the Imperial Conference had had a meeting that morning, and that he, Smuts, Hughes, and Massey did not intend to allow the British Empire to take a back seat. Great Britain had won the war. She had made enormous sacrifices in men and money, and they were quite determined that she should not be overshadowed by America.”³

Since the war the Pacific Ocean had become the focal point in naval affairs, as it was the one point at which the largest naval Powers came into contact with each other and where the balance of power between them was to be set. Dominating all other considerations and of prime importance to the problem of naval disarmament and the competition in naval building between the United States and Japan was the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Contracted in 1902 when Great Britain was anxious to protect her Far Eastern interests against the menace of Russian imperialism, revised in 1905, and renewed for ten years in 1911 when the German menace was growing daily, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had served to protect both British and Japanese interests in the Far East during the two decades in which it was in force. It was

¹ 147 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 2093-2145.

² Lord Riddell's *Intimate Diary at the Peace Conference and After*, p. 259.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

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an alliance wherein each Party guaranteed the Western Pacific interests of the other and was to come to the help of the other if those interests were attacked by a third Party. There was one exception to this rule. By Article IV of the Treaty of 1911 the Parties were freed from their obligation to help each other in case there existed a general arbitration treaty between one of the signatories and the attacking party. This was to exclude the possibility of an Anglo-American conflict, for at the time Great Britain was negotiating a general arbitration treaty with the United States. This treaty was not ratified by the American Senate, but a Peace Commission Treaty, signed September 15, 1914, was interpreted by Great Britain and Japan as having the same effect as a general arbitration treaty.¹

With the disappearance of the Russian and German menace to Britain's Far Eastern interests, the British motive in contracting the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had ceased to exist. As the Alliance had served as a shield under the cover of which Japanese imperialism in the Far East had developed and grown, public opinion in the United States held that Great Britain should terminate the Alliance,² since the only purpose it could now serve was to check, as it had done since its inception, the efforts of the United States to free China from aggressive Japanese domination and promote equality of commercial opportunity under the doctrine of the "Open Door." As naval building competition between the United States and Japan grew sharper, suspicion arose in the United States that Great Britain was maintaining the Anglo-Japanese Alliance as a check upon American naval activity.³ So long as the friction between the United States

¹ No official communication of this interpretation was made to the United States and misunderstanding resulted (138 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1573-1574).

² Lord Bryce observed that nine men out of ten in the United States were opposed to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (*New York Times*, October 19, 1921; *The Times*, October 18, 1921. *Vide The Times*, January 3, July 9, October 27, 1921; *Round Table*, September 1921, pp. 842-848).

³ Cf. the report of the American delegation to the Washington Conference stated on this point: "It may be stated without reservation that one of the most important factors in the Far Eastern situation was the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. This Alliance has been viewed by the people of the United States with deep concern. Originally designed as a measure of protection in view of the policies

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and Japan lasted and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance continued in existence, there was the possibility of Great Britain being drawn into conflict with the United States. The United States considered herself obliged to build a navy large enough to meet this menace.¹ The effect of the Alliance, therefore, was such as to make a change in it necessary if there were to be any satisfactory understanding on naval strength.²

The Alliance of 1911 was to last ten years and to continue until a year after either Party denounced it. As the original period of ten years was drawing to an end, there was a great deal of agitation in the British Empire as to whether or not the Alliance should be denounced. On July 8, 1920, the British and Japanese Governments had made a joint declaration to the League of Nations that, although the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1911 was in harmony with the spirit, it was not quite consistent with the letter of the Covenant.³ Nevertheless, the Alliance was not denounced and the British Government decided to let it run one year more while she consulted with the Dominions. A meeting of the Imperial Cabinet was held from June to August 1921, and the British Government considered the problem together with the Governments of the Dominions and India. The difficulty facing the Imperial Government was clearly put by Lloyd George to the House of Commons on July 11, 1921, in a statement which

of Russia and Germany in Far Eastern affairs, the continuance of the Alliance after all peril from those sources had ceased could not fail to be regarded as seriously prejudicial to our interests. Without reviewing the reasons for this disquietude, it was greatly increased by the 'state of international tension' which had arisen in the Pacific area. The question constantly recurred: The original sources of danger having been removed, against whom and for what purposes was the Alliance maintained? . . .

"It was, therefore, a matter of the greatest gratification that the American Delegation found that they were able to obtain an agreement by which the Anglo-Japanese Alliance should be immediately terminated" (*Sen. Doc.*, No. 126, 67th Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 821-822).

¹ This was not the official attitude of the United States, but merely an argument adduced by those interested in a large navy (*cf.* Statement of the American Delegation at the Washington Conference, *supra*, note 1).

² *Cf.* Buell, *op. cit.*; Chang, Chung-Fu, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*; Dennis, Alfred P., *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*; *British Documents on the Origin of the War*, IV.

³ *British State and Foreign Papers*, CXIII, p. 370.

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represented the general views of all Members of the Imperial Cabinet.

“The broad lines of Imperial policy in the Pacific and the Far East were the very first subjects to which we addressed ourselves at the meetings of the Imperial Cabinet, having a special regard to the Anglo-Japanese Agreement, the future of China, and the bearing of both these questions upon the relations of the British Empire with the United States. We were guided in our deliberations by three main considerations. In Japan we have an old and proved Ally. The agreement of twenty years’ standing between us has been of very great benefit, not only to ourselves and her, but to the peace of the Far East. In China there is a very numerous people, with great potentialities, who esteem our friendship highly and whose interests we, on our side, desire to assist and advance. In the United States, we see to-day, as we have always seen, the people closest to our own aims and ideals with whom it is for us, not merely a desire and an interest, but a deeply rooted instinct to consult and co-operate. Those were the main considerations in our meetings, and upon them we were unanimous. The object of our discussions was to find a method of combining all these three factors in a policy which would remove the danger of heavy naval expenditure in the Pacific, with all the evils which such expenditure entails, and would ensure the development of all legitimate national interests in the Far East.

* * * * *

“I have already explained that the first principle of our policy was friendly co-operation with the United States. We are all convinced that upon this, more than upon any single factor, depends the peace and well-being of the world. We also desire, as I have stated, to maintain our close friendship and co-operation with Japan. The greatest merit of that valuable friendship is that it harmonizes the influence and activities of the greatest Asiatic Powers, and thus constitutes an essential safeguard to the well-being of the British Empire and peace of the East. We also aim at preserving the open door in China, and at giving the Chinese people every opportunity of peaceful progress and development.

“In addition to these considerations, we desire to safeguard our own vital interests in the Pacific, and to preclude any competition in naval armaments between the Pacific Powers.”¹

The Imperial Cabinet agreed to communicate the position

¹ Cmd. 1474 of 1921, pp. 3-5; 144 *H.C. Debts.*, 5 s., cols. 914-918.

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of the British Empire to the Governments of the United States, Japan, and China with a view to a conference of the Powers on the subject of Far Eastern policy.¹ Before this was done President Harding issued his invitation to the chief naval Powers to attend the conference on the limitation of armaments at Washington. In view of the interdependence of Far Eastern questions and disarmament, the Imperial Cabinet examined in what way the Anglo-Japanese Alliance could be superseded by a larger arrangement including the United States, Japan, and Great Britain² and suggested a preliminary conference on this subject at London in order that the Dominion Prime Ministers might be present. The United States agreed in principle to such a preliminary conference. Some misunderstanding occurred, however, and the conference was not held. It was suggested to hold one in Washington preliminary to the Naval Conference, but the United States refused.³ The problem was therefore left over till November, when the difficulty of the foreign policy of the British Empire was happily resolved in the Washington Agreements of December 13, 1921, and February 6, 1922.

The problem to be considered at Washington in November 1921 was the means of keeping a balance of the naval armaments of each of the chief Pacific Powers so as to make war between them less likely and thereby to stop ruinous naval building competition. The one point where the interests of the three chief

¹ The Imperial Cabinet, upon the advice of the Lord Chancellor and the Law Officers of the Crown, came to the conclusion that the Joint British and Japanese declaration to the League of Nations of July 8, 1920, did not affect the validity of the Alliance, which was still in force. Therefore, on July 7, 1921, the British and Japanese Governments despatched a second communication to the League in which they agreed that where the procedure of the Covenant and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance were in conflict they would abide by the Covenant (*Monthly Summary of the League of Nations*, August 1921, p. 64).

² In his opening speech, on June 21, 1921, Mr. Hughes, the Australian Premier, made it clear that while he favoured a renewal of the Alliance because any other course would isolate Japan and hurt her pride, "it may be laid down as a *sine qua non* that any future treaty with Japan, to be satisfactory to Australia, must specifically exclude the possibility of a war with the United States of America." He suggested a conference with the United States and Japan to evolve something mutually acceptable (Cmd. 1474, pp. 19-21).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

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naval Powers converged, and hence their national policies were most likely to clash and danger of war was greatest, lay in the Pacific where they were also the chief Powers interested. To the two most important of these Powers, Great Britain and the United States, naval armaments were the only armaments used in diplomatic bargainings with civilized nations. To Japan, the other Power with paramount interests in the Pacific, her navy was her chief weapon in her contact with Great Britain and the United States, her army not serving as a means of pressure against them. Parity in naval armaments between the United States and Great Britain could not solve the problem so long as the Anglo-Japanese Alliance remained in existence, for it gave supremacy to British-Japanese interests. If this Alliance could be made innocuous, that is, unable to influence the situation, an equilibrium could speedily be reached in the Pacific of which the limitation of naval armaments would be only a part, although an essential part. The British Government fully recognized this,¹ as did the Governments of the United States and Japan.² The Washington Conference was primarily a conference on the problem of striking a balance of

¹ On August 18, 1921, Lloyd George said in the House of Commons: "But the surest way to make a success of any Disarmament Conference is, first of all, to come to an understanding about the Pacific. I do not myself believe that you will attain the same measure of success in a Disarmament Conference until you have attained that complete understanding" (146 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1706).

² The Report of the American Delegation to President Harding, dated February 9, 1922, concludes: "The declared object was, in its naval aspects, to stop the race of competitive building of warships which was in process and which was so distressingly like the competition that immediately preceded the war of 1914. Competitive armaments, however, is the result of a state of mind in which a national expectation of attack by some other country causes preparation to meet the attack. To stop competition, it is necessary to deal with the state of mind from which it results. A belief in the pacific intentions of other Powers must be substituted for suspicion and apprehension.

"The negotiations which led to the Four-Power Treaty were the process of attaining that new state of mind, and the Four-Power Treaty itself was the expression of that new state of mind. It terminated the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and substituted friendly conference in place of war as the first reaction from any controversies which might arise in the region of the Pacific; it would not have been possible except as a part of a plan including a limitation and a reduction of naval armaments, but that limitation and reduction would not have been possible without the new relations established by the Four-Power Treaty or something equivalent to it" (*Sen. Doc.*, No. 126, 67th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 865-866).

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power in the Pacific between the nations whose chief weapon was the navy, and it was successful only where it did settle this problem. Where other considerations were involved and armaments served important purposes in other areas, no agreement was possible.

The British Government hoped to restore the balance of power in the Pacific by including the United States in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, thereby converting it into a Triple Alliance. "If an Alliance with Japan," said Mr. Lloyd George, in the House of Commons on August 18, 1921, "could merge into a greater understanding with Japan and with the United States of America in all the problems of the Pacific, that would be a great event, and a guarantee for the peace of the world."¹ The American Government, however, were opposed to any Alliance of any kind and proposed Triple Alliance in particular, where it might be outvoted in case of dispute, or, in other words, where the balance still remained on the side of Great Britain and Japan. The solution was found in a Four-Power Treaty of Great Britain, the United States, Japan, and France, which omitted the offensive features of the proposed Triple Alliance and abolished the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.

In this Treaty the Parties mutually agreed to "respect" each others' rights in "their insular possessions and insular dominions in the region of the Pacific Ocean," to hold a joint conference for the "consideration and adjustment" of any controversies between any of them arising out of such rights, and to consult one another on the "most efficient measures to be taken" in case of aggressive action by any other Power. Upon the deposit at Washington of the ratifications of this Treaty, which was to remain in force, in the first instance for ten years from the date of taking effect, the Anglo-Japanese Agreement of July 13, 1911, was to come to an end. This Treaty, which was interpreted to exclude the main islands of Japan, remedied the situation resulting from the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in that it did not unite two

¹ 146 *H.C. Debts.*, 5 s., col. 1705. It seems that Mr. Balfour had already drafted a three-power treaty of alliance (Buell, *op. cit.*, p. 174).

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Powers against threats from outside Powers, but formed a co-operative pact with provisions for consultation and mutual action. This balance of power was stabilized by the Treaty on the Limitation of Armaments which ensured naval supremacy to each of the chief Pacific Powers within its respective sphere of influence. The Washington Conference of 1921-1922 thus established an equilibrium among the chief Pacific Powers which rendered war among them more unlikely and made possible the settlement of outstanding Asiatic problems under less bellicose conditions.¹

The discussions of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Four-Power Treaty which was signed December 13, 1921, took place privately outside the Conference meetings. The discussions of the counterpart of this Treaty, the Treaty on the Limitation of Armaments of February 6, 1922, took place in the plenary meetings of the Conference and in the meetings of the commissions and sub-commissions which were held from November 12, 1921, to February 6, 1922. In his opening speech of the Conference, Secretary of State Hughes, who was presiding, presented a plan for the limitation of the naval armaments of Great Britain, the United States, and Japan, leaving it to further adjustment to meet the needs of Italy and France. Mr. Hughes based the American proposal on four general principles:

- “(1) That all capital ship-building programmes, either actual or projected, should be abandoned;
- “(2) That further reduction should be made through the scrapping of certain of the older ships;
- “(3) That, in general, regard should be had to the existing naval strength of the Powers concerned;
- “(4) That the capital ship tonnage should be used as the measurement of strength for navies and a proportionate allowance of auxiliary combatant craft prescribed.”²

¹ Buell, *op. cit.*, Chap. VI; Toynbee, Arnold J., *Survey of International Affairs, 1920-1923*, Part IV; Vinacke, Harold M., *A History of the Far East in Modern Times*, Chap. XXI; Golovin, General N., *The Problem of the Pacific in the Twentieth Century*, Chap. X.

² *Conference on the Limitation of Armaments*, p. 60.

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After laying down a naval building holiday of ten years for capital ships, the American proposal provided for the scrapping by the United States of 30 ships built or building with an aggregate tonnage of 845,740 tons. Great Britain was to scrap 23 ships built or building with an aggregate tonnage of 583,375 tons; and Japan 7 ships built or building with a tonnage of 289,100 tons. This would leave the United States with 18 capital ships of a total tonnage of 500,650 tons, Great Britain 22 ships of 604,450 tons, and Japan 10 ships of 299,700 tons. Future replacement of capital ships, not in any case to take place until ten years after the signature of the Convention, was not to exceed a total tonnage of 500,000 tons for the United States and Great Britain and 325,000 tons for Japan, a ratio of 5-5-3. Future capital ships could not exceed 35,000 tons each. Auxiliary vessels were to be limited on the same scale.¹

This bold proposal was based on the *status quo*, which would maintain a rough balance of naval power in the Pacific by making each navy supreme in its own waters. Japan was not satisfied with a navy three-fifths the size of the American Navy, as she did not consider it sufficient for her national safety. While the American proposal established the desired balance of power at the time, all this might be changed through the development by Great Britain or the United States of advanced naval bases in Japanese waters.² It was essential, in view of the intended abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, that neither the American nor the British Navy should be in position to threaten Japan and her possessions. Only complete naval supremacy in her own waters could ensure this for Japan. An agreement was therefore concluded which maintained the *status quo* in naval

¹ *Conference on the Limitation of Armaments*, pp. 60-66, 78-92.

² "Before assenting to this ratio the Japanese Government desired assurances with regard to the increase of fortifications and naval bases in the Pacific Ocean. It was insisted that while the capital ship ratio proposed by the American Government might be acceptable under existing conditions, it could not be regarded as acceptable by the Japanese Government if the Government of the United States should fortify or establish additional naval bases in the Pacific Ocean" (Report of the American Delegation, *Sen. Doc.*, No. 126, 67th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 800).

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bases within a certain well-defined area in the Western Pacific. With the nearest effective naval base thousands of miles away, neither the American nor the British Navy could hope to master an only slightly inferior navy operating in its home waters. In this manner the supremacy established for each Fleet was crystallized and the balance of power was struck which stabilized the political situation in the Pacific.

The American plan formed the basis of the work of the Committee on Limitation of Armament. After agreement on naval bases had been reached, the plan as regarded capital ships¹ was accepted with only slight alterations. The Japanese were allowed to retain the *Mutsu* which was to have been scrapped and Great Britain was compensated by being allowed to build two Hoods (*Nelson* and *Rodney*) and the United States was permitted to complete work on the *Colorado* and *West Virginia*. In their stead Japan scrapped the *Settsu*, Great Britain four ships of the *King George V* type, and the United States the *North Dakota* and the *Delaware*. This left the United States 18 ships of an aggregate tonnage of 525,850 tons; Great Britain 20 ships of a tonnage of 583,050 tons, and Japan 10 ships of 313,300 tons. The total replacement tonnage was raised to 525,000 tons each for Great Britain and the United States and to 315,000 tons for Japan, still maintaining the 5-5-3 ratio. The total capital ship tonnage of France and Italy was fixed at 175,000 tons each, a corresponding ratio of 1-67. Capital ships to be acquired or constructed for, by, and within the jurisdiction of the contracting Parties were limited to a maximum individual tonnage of 35,000 tons standard displacement,² and the maximum calibre of their guns, to 16 inches

¹ "A capital ship, in the case of ships hereafter built, is defined as a vessel of war, not an aircraft carrier, whose displacement exceeds 10,000 tons (10,160 metric tons) standard displacement, or which carries a gun with a calibre exceeding 8 inches (203 millimetres)" (*Treaty Limiting Naval Armament*, Chap. II, Part 4).

² "The standard displacement of a ship is the displacement of the ship complete, fully manned, engined, and equipped ready for sea, including all armament and ammunition, equipment, outfit, provisions, and fresh water for crew, miscellaneous stores and implements of every description that are intended to be carried in war, but without fuel or reserve feed water on board" (*ibid.*).

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(406 mm.). No limitation of auxiliary vessels was agreed upon except with regard to aircraft carriers.¹

The total aircraft carrier tonnage of Great Britain and the United States was limited to 135,000 tons each, of Japan to 81,000 tons, and of France and Italy to 60,000 tons each; 27,000 tons was fixed as the maximum individual tonnage for an aircraft carrier, although each contracting Party was allowed two ships of 33,000 tons within the total tonnage limits assigned. No aircraft carrier mounting any guns exceeding 6-inch could have more than ten guns larger than 5-inch, excluding anti-aircraft guns. In the case of aircraft carriers of more than 27,000 tons having guns of over 6-inch, only eight guns of more than 5-inch could be carried. No ships of war except capital ships and aircraft carriers could exceed a maximum individual tonnage of 10,000 tons and none but capital ships might have guns of more than 8-inch calibre. There were also rules prohibiting the construction for third parties of ships exceeding the limitations laid down in the Treaty. In any case, information of any building of warships for a non-Signatory Power was to be sent to the other Signatories. In case of war the contracting Parties could not seize vessels of war being constructed within their jurisdiction for other Powers, and they undertook not to dispose of any ship in such a way as to allow it to become a ship of war in any other navy. The Treaty also included rules for scrapping and replacement, definitions, and various miscellaneous provisions.

When laying down the tonnage of capital ships to be retained, the United States Government took into consideration, as stated by Mr. Hughes in his third principle, the strength of the navies concerned. By scrapping all pre-dreadnought construction and all uncompleted ships, the American proposal provided for the stabilization of the *status quo* in immediately effective strength of capital

¹ "An aircraft carrier is defined as a vessel of war with a displacement in excess of 10,000 tons (10,160 metric tons) standard displacement designed for the specific and exclusive purpose of carrying aircraft. It must be so constructed that aircraft can be launched therefrom and landed thereon, and not designed and constructed for carrying more powerful armament than that allowed to it under Article IX or Article X as the case may be" (*Treaty Limiting Naval Armaments*, Chap. II, Part 4).

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ships. This gave roughly a ratio of 5-5-3 for the United States, the British Empire, and Japan, as the larger number of ships and tonnage of the British Empire was compensated by the qualitative superiority of the American ships. This paper superiority in numbers and tonnage for the British Empire disappeared altogether in the replacement programme where mathematical parity was worked out in terms of fifteen 35,000-ton ships. The ten-year capital ship building holiday ensured a gradual process of replacement until 1941, when this mathematical parity should be reached. The equilibrium was preserved throughout and the element of surprise entirely eliminated by the method of limitation. The American proposal and the final Treaty, following the method adopted at Versailles,¹ enumerated the actual ships to be kept and scrapped and the general specifications of the ships which were to replace them. In this way building competition was almost completely excluded.

At the second plenary meeting, on November 15, 1921, Mr. Balfour accepted this practical application of the "One-Power Standard," subject to two conditions. In the first place, the quantity of ships was acceptable only so long as British supremacy in European waters remained unchallenged by any single Power or group of Powers. Speaking of the American proposal, he said, "It, therefore, of necessity omits all consideration for the time being of those European nations who have diminished their fleets, and who at present have no desire, and I hope will never have any desire, to own fleets beyond the necessities that national honour and national defence require."² The second condition to British acceptance of the American plan was the definite understanding that only battle fleets were under consideration. Mr. Balfour continued, "Taking those two as really belonging to one subject, namely the battle fleet, taking these two, the battleships themselves and the vessels auxiliary and necessary to a battle fleet, we think that the proportion between the various countries

¹ The same result was reached by enumeration of the ships to be handed over to the Allies and thereby limiting by name each ship that was retained.

² *Sen. Doc.*, No. 126, 67th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 67-68.

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is acceptable; we think the limitation of amounts is reasonable; we think it should be accepted; we firmly believe that it will be accepted. . . . However, there may be other questions of detail, questions connected with replacement, questions connected with cruisers which are not connected with or required for fleet action. But those are matters for consideration by the technical experts.”¹

In this last condition lay the kernel of the post-Washington Anglo-American naval conflict. American needs being expressed solely in terms of the battle fleet, the American Navy Department believed that the British Government had agreed to mathematical parity in all classes of ships. British naval needs, on the other hand, demanded, side by side with the battle fleet, many convoying vessels—to use Mr. Churchill’s phrase. While, therefore, the British Government was willing to grant to the Americans parity in battle strength, it reserved its right to build whatever cruisers and other craft it might need to protect its commerce on the high seas. Mr. Churchill, in a debate in the House of Commons on March 15, 1930, made it clear that “The Washington Treaty . . . rested upon the basis that Great Britain and the United States should be equal in all the battle elements of their respective fleets. It was confined exclusively to those elements.”² “After the war, at Washington, we accepted the One-Power Standard in all that contributed to battle-strength, excluding all other elements necessary for the protection of food supplies.”³ To support his case Churchill produced a telegram written by Curzon and signed by Lloyd George which was sent to Balfour during the Washington Conference and which gave it as the opinion of the Cabinet that the British Empire was in a special position regarding cruisers and commerce-protecting vessels and must be treated in accordance with this special position.⁴

¹ *Sen. Doc.*, No. 126, 67th Cong. 2nd Sess., pp. 68–69.

² 238 *H.C. Deb.*, 5 s., col. 2098.

³ *Ibid.*, col. 2104.

⁴ Lloyd George to Balfour. “We welcome your decision to press for the total abolition of submarines. Even if you can obtain this, we wish to be consulted

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The two considerations on the basis of which the British Government accepted parity with the United States were brought to the fore as cardinal principles of British naval policy during the discussion of the limitation of auxiliary craft. The United States had proposed a limitation of the tonnage of ships by categories for aircraft carriers and submarines and a global tonnage limitation for all other surface craft exceeding certain tonnage, armament, or speed. When the French Government insisted upon a submarine tonnage of 90,000 tons, the same figure as that allowed to the United States and Great Britain under the American proposal, the British delegation refused to agree to limitation of submarine tonnage at this figure and to limit the tonnage of other auxiliary vessels under 10,000 tons. The British Government felt that France's submarine development was aimed at Great Britain, and the Castex incident did much to embitter the situation.¹ At the ninth meeting of the Committee on the Limitation of Armament, on December 28, 1921, Mr. Balfour said that "he must, however, dwell shortly on the effect which the French declaration of naval policy must inevitably produce upon British opinion. It was perfectly clear that if at Britain's very gates a fleet of

before a final decision is taken upon the limited scales of construction of small craft permitted to the various Signatories. The position of Britain, with her world-wide possessions and food supplies, on the one hand clearly requires an entirely different standard from that acceptable by self-contained nations. We apprehend, however, that there is very little chance of the abolition of submarines being agreed upon, and in this event we must insist at all costs upon absolute freedom in regard to the character and number of all vessels under, say, 10,000 tons. We cannot, in the face of French freedom to construct a great submarine fleet, to say nothing of the submarine and cruiser construction of other Powers, enter into any agreement fettering our liberty to build whatever number and classes of cruisers and anti-submarine craft we may consider necessary to the maintenance of national and Imperial life. We feel sure, from our knowledge of your outlook on the whole problem, that you will share this view to the full. Even at the cost of complete rupture, we feel certain you will not agree to any restriction in this sphere without previous consultation with the Cabinet" (238 *H.C. Deb.*, 5 s., col. 2099).

¹ In a series of articles appearing in the *Revue Maritime, Capitaine de Frégate*, Castex had supported the thesis that submarines can be used for commerce destruction. Lord Lee quoted part of the articles in question at the Washington Conference to defend the British apprehensions concerning the French submarine programme (*Revue Maritime*, January 1920). For a disinterested summary of the incident, *vide* Buell, *op. cit.*, pp. 221-234.

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90,000 tons of submarines (60,000 tons of which were to be of the newest type) was to be constructed, no limitation of any kind on auxiliary vessels capable of dealing with submarines could be admitted by the Government which he represented. Public notice had now been given in the most formal manner that this great fleet was to be built on the shores nearest to Britain, and it would necessarily be a very great menace to her. He had no doubt, if the occasion arose, that Britain would be equal to it, but it was on condition that she reserved the full right to build any auxiliary craft which she considered necessary to deal with the situation.”¹ Accordingly, there was no limitation of auxiliary craft.

In its proposals for quantitative limitation of the fleets of the chief naval Powers the United States Government had taken existing conditions into consideration. It approached the problem of qualitative limitation from the same point of view. At the time of the Washington Conference no capital ship had been built by any of the Contracting Parties—except the *Hood* of Great Britain²—which exceeded 35,000 tons or had guns larger than 16-inch. Larger ships were being built, 43,200-ton battleships and 43,500-ton battle cruisers for the United States³ and four new *Hoods* of 48,000 tons for Great Britain.⁴ The Treaty on the Limitation of Armament therefore attempted to put an end to

¹ *Sen. Doc.*, No. 126, 67th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 312–313. This reservation applied only to anti-submarine craft and not to aircraft carriers. As Lord Lee maintained that airplane carriers were essentially fleet weapons and therefore the same ratio applied to capital ships ought to be applied to them (*ibid.*, p. 358). Therefore, Great Britain accepted 135,000 tons of aircraft carriers, parity with the United States, while Japan, France, and Italy had 81,000 tons and 60,000 tons respectively.

² H.M.S. *Hood* has a legend displacement of 41,200 tons or 42,100 tons standard displacement.

³ “Return of the Fleets of the World,” *Parliamentary Sessional Paper* [64] of 1921.

⁴ The four new *Hoods* were to have a legend displacement of 48,000 tons (47,500 tons standard displacement), a speed of 32 knots, and an armament of nine 16-inch guns in three triple turrets and sixteen 6-inch guns in eight twin turrets (Berry, Sir William J., “Capital Ships and Cruisers,” *Brassey’s Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1931, p. 106; *Sen. Doc.*, No. 126, 67th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 802).

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a dangerous and expensive building competition.¹ It was a competition much older than any of the contracting parties, a competition in the quality of ships which has existed from the days of Phoenicia and Crete up to the present day. International conventions for the limitation of naval armaments have failed to put an end to it.

The competitive development of modern defensive and offensive armaments, or armour and gun power, has brought into existence a qualitative competition in ships which would be able to destroy the enemy vessels without suffering any casualties themselves and which would give an initial superiority over the enemy in case of war. This qualitative superiority can last only a few years, as the potential enemy can also build ships of similar designs and with similar advantages, must build them, in fact, in order to defend himself and prevent his fleet becoming worthless. A qualitatively inferior navy is of little value either defensively or offensively, for the stronger ships can shoot down those with inferior gun power without even coming within range of their guns.² The time lag between the introduction of a new type and the adoption of the same type by other navies insures quantitative superiority for a time after this adoption has taken place, but this superiority decreases as building competition grows keener. The net result is a continuous search for new and more powerful types of ships-of-the-line and a competition in building which

¹ Sixteen years earlier President Roosevelt had proposed to stop this competition. Count Gleichen reported a conversation with President Roosevelt on August 31, 1906, in which the latter said that "it is absurd for the different nations to try and outvie each other in building big battleships: it only leads to an unnecessary outlay of money. I think that the *Dreadnought* is quite as big as any ship need be, and my idea is that it should be brought forward as a proposal at the Hague Conference that no ship should in the future be built bigger than the *Dreadnought*." To this despatch Mr. Francis Campbell, the Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, added the following minute: "I think a proposal that the Conference should lay down that no man-of-war is to exceed a certain size would only be laughed at" (Count Gleichen to Sir M. Durand, September 2, 1906, *British Documents on the Origin of the War*, VIII, pp. 195-196).

² *E.g.* the Battle of Coronel. The statement must be modified in cases of close engagements with low visibility as at Jutland.

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steadily increases expense.¹ Thus the quinquere gave way to the galley, to the galleons, to the triple-decker, to the armour-clad, to the dreadnought, and led to the sea monster of 42,000 tons, the *Hood*, the largest warship afloat, which cost over £6,000,000 to build and equip.²

Continual increase in size of ships was necessitated by the never-ending competition between protective devices and destroying agents. Besides the competition between armour and gun power, another had arisen between armour and mine and torpedo power. The rapid development in torpedoes and torpedo craft under the stimulus of the World War necessitated greater protection for the capital ship. Decrease in vulnerability can be achieved through either an increase in power of resistance to blows through an increase in the defensive armour—thicker side and deck armour, bulges, the subdivision of the hull in small watertight bulkheads, etc.—and hence an increase in size and

¹ The following table, taken from *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1932, shows the gradual growth of British capital ships since the first ironclad:

Name	Year Completed	Tonnage	Speed	Weight of Shot in One Round	Collective Muzzle Velocity in One Round
		Gross Tons	Knots	Lb.	Ft.-lb.
<i>Warrior</i>	1861	9,210	14·50	3,800	61,476
<i>Hercules</i>	1868	8,680	14	5,400	70,200
<i>Alexandra</i>	1877	9,490	15	5,426	71,400
<i>Inflexible</i>	1881	11,880	13	6,936	123,120
<i>Benbow</i>	1888	10,600	16·75	4,600	135,560
<i>Royal Sovereign</i> ..	1892	14,150	17·50	5,800	159,610
<i>Canopus</i>	1900	12,950	18·25	4,600	178,720
<i>Prince of Wales</i> ..	1902	15,000	18·25	4,600	194,400
<i>King Edward VII</i> ..	1905	16,350	19	6,100	271,800
<i>Dreadnought</i>	1906	17,900	21	8,800	487,100
<i>Neptune</i>	1911	20,600	21·5	8,900	545,000
<i>Ajax</i>	1913	25,000	21·5	14,500	625,000
<i>Queen Elizabeth</i> ..	1914	27,500	25	16,400	710,000
<i>Royal Sovereign</i> ..	1916	25,750	23	15,360	638,000
<i>Hood</i>	1920	41,200	31	15,360	638,000
<i>Nelson</i>	1927	35,000	23	19,170	919,400

² Bywater, *op. cit.*, p. 14; 121 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 340.

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cost, or a decrease in the likelihood of being hit by an increase in speed and decrease in size which in turn entail decreased gun power or decreased armour. The first solution had been the one adopted until the Washington Conference. In order to protect the battleship from torpedo power and gun power, it had been found necessary by the various Admiralties to increase its size to almost 50,000 tons.

Sir William J. Berry, late Director of Naval Construction of the British Admiralty, wrote, "At the time when the Washington Conference was called, the tendency of designs for capital ships was thus greatly to increase their size and incidentally their cost, in order to make the ship more powerful than her contemporaries and as nearly as possible invulnerable to all forms of attack that had been met during the war, and to embody also the result of researches that had been made into the development that might be expected to follow."¹ Sir George Thurston, a famous naval architect, wrote in 1921, "The writer is convinced that the capital ship, things being what they are, must of necessity continue to grow in size, and by its very growth add to its might and its invulnerability, but that it will overreach the limit outlined is unlikely."² The limits of the ideal capital ship he placed as follows:

Length between perpendiculars	..	..	..	932 ft. 0 in.
Breadth extreme	..	..	..	112 ft. 0 in.
Draught	..	..	..	31 ft. 6 in.
Displacement at legend draught	..	..	..	57,000 tons
Shaft horse-power	..	..	..	200,000 h.p.
Speed at load draught, about	..	..	..	33½ knots
Main armament	..	..	..	8 18-inch 45-cal. guns ³

The immense cost of such ships as well as the cost involved in the consequent *déclassement* of the rest of the capital ships of a fleet by the production of a new more powerful type were rendering further developments along this line almost prohibitive. The alternative could evidently be achieved only through inter-

¹ "Capital Ships and Cruisers," *op. cit.*, p. 106.

² "The Capital Ship of the Future," *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1920-1921, p. 81.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

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national agreements to scrap more powerful ships and to conform new building to certain well-defined specifications.

The Washington Naval Treaty adopted neither one nor the other of the alternatives outlined above. It prohibited the construction of ships larger than 35,000 tons, a limit which, while it confirmed the *status quo*, did not allow enough tonnage to build ships embodying the latest designs and protective devices.¹ According to Capitaine Delpierre, F.N., the Corps of Naval Constructors of France "believe, moreover, that the 35,000-ton limit decided upon at Washington for battleships does not allow a satisfactory solution of the protection problem. Owing to this limit, either the battleship will not have the requisite offensive power and speed, or else if it is suitably armed and suitably fast, it will remain vulnerable to the submarine torpedoes and aerial bombs. It is estimated that the tonnage should have been 45,000 or 50,000 tons to allow the battleship to regain its superiority over new weapons."² On the other hand, the maximum limitation of the size of capital ships set at Washington tended to become also the minimum limit.³ The replacement programme as worked out in the Treaty called for the maximum size of ships. The practical effect of the qualitative limitation on tonnage and gunnage of capital ships was, therefore, to standardize the capital ship as a ship of 35,000 tons with 16-inch guns. This size of ship was not large enough, yet it was too large for effective protection against torpedo attack if the balance between speed, gun power, and protection were kept. As a result there arose, after the

¹ Great Britain built the *Nelson* and *Rodney* to embody the design of the planned super-Hoods except the speed. Instead of doing 32 knots, the *Nelson* and *Rodney* only do 23. The Washington Conference has thus put an end to the fast battle cruiser.

² "The French Navy in the War and After the War," *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1923, p. 109.

³ At the meeting of the Committee on the Limitation of Armament of December 22, 1921, Admiral de Bon said that "he did not believe it possible, when the question of the French Navy was considered, that anybody could believe France so foolish as to construct small capital ships; that is to say, those inferior to 35,000 tons. If France should later find herself obliged to construct vessels of war—although she had not yet expressed her intention of doing so—she must certainly build vessels equal in strength to the capital ships of other navies" (*Sen. Doc.*, No. 126, 67th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 261).

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Washington Conference, a movement for a decrease in the size of capital ships.¹

From the point of view of naval strategy, the size of the capital ship makes no difference so long as the enemy has no larger ships. Thus, in the opinion of certain writers, capital ships might be of any tonnage large enough to enable them to cruise within the radius of modern lines of communications and still be fit to give battle. This tonnage could be as low as 6,500 tons.² The Board of the Admiralty, however, holds that the work of a capital ship cannot be performed by a ship of tonnage as low as 10,000 tons.³ Rear-Admiral Sir Alfred Chatfield, Third Sea Lord and Controller, speaking at the launching of the *Cumberland*, March 16, 1926, explained why the Admiralty holds that view.

"If the seas are to be ruled by navies, we must have vessels that can withstand modern weapons. Until modern weapons are limited in the same way that the *Cumberland* has been limited, you must produce ships of a sufficient size to withstand these weapons. As long as you take ships to sea in mine-strewn waters, where the size of the mine is unlimited, so long must you have good underwater protection to meet that. So long as aircraft and the bombs they carry are unlimited in size, so long must you protect your ships with armour that can withstand that menace. So long as submarines can carry an enormous explosive charge, so long must your ships be sturdy and strong to enable it to meet that menace. There are many other reasons of a similar nature which I could give to you, but do please tell those who always say how unnecessary, how wasteful, and how extravagant the Admiralties of the world are in building these large and cumbrous vessels, that there is an answer to that question, and impress upon them that it is the answer that is agreed to by every maritime country in the world."⁴

Qualitative limitations of capital ships would not stop qualitative competition in naval building. Even if the size of capital ships were greatly reduced and their gun power also, there would still remain torpedo power. There would still be a qualitative

¹ *Vide infra*, pp. 222-225.

² Cf. Richmond, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-223; Bacon, Admiral Sir Reginald, "The Future Needs of the Navy," *The Nineteenth Century and After*, I, p. 15.

³ 205 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 30.

⁴ Quoted in *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1927, p. 4.

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competition in torpedo craft and a similar competition in anti-torpedo craft and in commerce-protecting vessels.¹ Mr. Balfour, in the second plenary meeting of the Conference, had foreseen this and, while accepting the American proposals, complained that the allotted submarine tonnage was too high.² He favoured either abolition of submarines altogether or a stricter quantitative limitation of tonnage coupled with a qualitative limitation on larger submarines.³ The argument was taken up in the fifth meeting of the Committee on Limitation of Armament, on December 22, 1921, by Lord Lee of Fareham, who put forward the British case for abolition of the submarine. He "endeavoured to prove that the submarine was only to a limited extent a weapon of defence, that for offence it was only really valuable when used against merchant ships, and that it constituted the greatest peril to which the mercantile marine of the world was exposed. For defence he did not say it was wholly useless, but merely inefficient, and that its disadvantages greatly exceeded its advantages except for war on the mercantile marine."⁴

¹ Cf. Captain Dudley W. Knox, U.S.N., writes that "the primary impulse in the renewal of competitive naval building on a large scale, as manifested by the extensive construction programmes of cruisers and other auxiliary naval tonnage by several of the Powers, is probably a desire to gain in relative aggregate naval strength. Some of these programmes are of such scope and involve such large expenditures of funds as to nullify the fundamental spirit of the Naval Treaty signed at Washington (the spirit of a naval holiday on the basis of the then *status quo* in total sea-power) and to defeat the cardinal object of reducing 'the burdens of competition in armaments' solemnly declared in the preamble of that treaty" (*Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1925, p. 78).

² The American proposal called for 90,000 tons of submarines for the United States and Great Britain and 54,000 tons for Japan (*Sen. Doc.*, No. 126, 67th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 61).

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 264-269. Admiral of the Fleet Lord Wester Wemyss disagrees with this position. He says regarding Mr. Balfour's declaration of December 23rd, where he repeats the same argument, "Submarines have rendered a close blockade impossible and the duties they carried out in the North Sea watching the enemy coasts have proved them to be a most valuable adjunct to the main fleet. As commerce destroyers, however, their lack of means for providing for the safety of the crews of the vessels seized is in itself sufficient to make them useless for this purpose, unless the illegal and inhuman practice of sinking without warning is resorted to. In fact, Mr. Balfour's statement is open to the gravest criticism, for experience proves that as a weapon of offence the submarine is a useful adjunct to the main fleet, that as one of defence it plays an

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At the Paris Peace Conference, in a memorandum presented to the Allied Naval Council on June 27, 1919, the British Admiralty had favoured a universal prohibition of submarine construction and a general destruction of existing vessels.¹ While this had been applied to Germany, the prohibition had not been made general. The experience of the war had shown that submarines attacked most successfully merchant shipping, German submarines sinking 12,000,000 tons of shipping worth \$1,100,000,000 apart from cargoes.² With £700,000,000 worth of Empire owned ships and cargoes afloat at any given moment over 80,000 miles of sea routes,³ the Admiralty was anxious to abolish a weapon which had proved so effective during the war. The British delegation at the Washington Conference therefore pressed for the abolition of submarines, but in this it was alone,⁴ and the submarine was allowed to remain a part of the modern fleet. Mr. Balfour, however, on December 24, 1921, read the following declaration:

"The British Empire delegation desired formally to place on record its opinion that the use of submarines, whilst of small value for defensive purposes, leads inevitably to acts which are inconsistent with the laws of war and the dictates of humanity, and the delegation desires that united action should be taken by all nations to forbid their maintenance, construction, or employment."⁵

The unsuccessful attempt to abolish submarines as legitimate weapons of war was accompanied by an attempt to restrict the illegitimate use of the submarine against merchant shipping. To this end the American delegation, in the person of Elihu Root, presented certain rules "to make more effective the rules adopted

important rôle and that as a commerce destroyer it is, if legitimately used, practically useless" ("Washington and After," *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 91, p. 407).

¹ Trevilly, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-146.

² *Sen. Doc.*, No. 126, 67th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 266.

³ 262 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1503.

⁴ The American delegation did not favour the abolition of the submarine, although at the Peace Conference, the United States Naval Advisory Staff had advocated such abolition (*cf. supra*, p. 76). Buell claims that the position of the American Delegation at the Washington Conference was contrary to American public opinion on submarines (*op. cit.*, p. 17, note).

⁵ *Sen. Doc.*, No. 126, 67th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 302.

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by civilized nations for the preservation of the lives of neutrals and non-combatants at sea in time of war." These rules were incorporated in a Treaty signed on February 6, 1922. After declaring the existing practice of international law regarding the capture of merchantmen—to wit: (a) that a merchant vessel must first be ordered to stop and its character must be ascertained before it can be seized, (b) that it may not be attacked unless it resists visit and search or does not obey orders after being seized, (c) that it may not be sunk without the crew having first been placed in safety, (d) that submarines are not exempt from following these rules, and (e) that if they cannot follow them they should desist from attack and seizure—the Signatory Powers invited all civilized Powers to express their assent to these rules of law.

Furthermore, the Signatory Powers declared that any person violating these laws, under any authority whatsoever, will be deemed to have committed an act of piracy and be liable for trial wheresoever he may be found. Recognizing the practical impossibility of a legal employment of submarines against commerce, the Contracting Parties, "to the end that the prohibition of the use of submarines as commerce destroyers shall be universally accepted as a part of the law of nations," now accepted the prohibition as henceforth binding as between themselves and invited all other nations to adhere to it.¹ This Treaty was the beginning of the codification of the laws of war which the Conference was to undertake through a Commission of Jurists.² It is very interesting from the legal point of view as marking the beginning of criminal international law where jurisdiction to commit violators for trial is given to any Government and where obedience to national law is subordinated to the dictates of international law. Its contribution to the limitation of armaments, however, was

¹ *Sen. Doc.*, No. 126, 67th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 815-816. According to *The Times* (November 27, 1918), the American Commission to the Peace Conference was to advocate the complete elimination of the submarine as a commerce destroyer—it would be forbidden to capture merchantmen—as a part of the programme for the freedom of the seas.

² *Vide infra*, pp. 324-325.

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purely psychological. The total abolition of submarines, such as was planned at the First Hague Conference, would have halted the competition in submarine torpedo craft and anti-submarine vessels. The present Treaty was, nevertheless, a step forward because it reassured public opinion in Great Britain which, rightly or wrongly,¹ held that the commerce-destroying submarine was a peculiar threat to vital British interests. The Treaty made of the submarine an ordinary ship of war and took from it the stigma of being a "murderous and foul weapon."²

Having failed to abolish the submarine, the Conference approached the problem of the quantitative limitation of submarines and auxiliary craft, and again failed to reach an agreement. Each Power retained its full liberty to build whatever craft it wished. In order to prevent capital ships being built under the guise of auxiliary craft, Mr. Hughes suggested the limitation of the maximum tonnage of ships of war other than capital ships and aircraft carriers. This limitation he placed at 10,000 tons and the maximum calibre of gun which might be carried at 8 inches. These figures were again chosen upon examination of existing tonnage. While the light cruisers of most of the Powers were of a tonnage ranging between 5,000 and 8,000 tons and carried only 6-inch guns, the British Navy had three light cruisers of the improved *Birmingham* type (*Frobisher*, *Effingham*, and *Hawkins*), which displaced 9,750 tons and carried 7.5-inch guns. Rear-Admiral Badger, U.S.N., had presented a plan to

¹ The percentages of the loss of gross tonnage of the navies of the world between July 1914 and October 31, 1918, subtracting the tonnage sunk, captured, or interned by the enemy and otherwise disposed of, and adding new construction, purchases, etc., reveal the fact that, while Great Britain suffered most in the total amount of tonnage involved because she was the largest shipping country in the world, it was the neutral countries which suffered most from submarine and other commerce-destroying activities of the enemy. The British Empire shows a net loss of 3,084,000 tons or 14.6 per cent; France, 32.2 per cent; Italy, 27.2 per cent; Russia 31.7 per cent; Norway, 50.3 per cent; Greece, 41.6 per cent; Denmark, 24.4 per cent; Spain, 18.0 per cent; Holland, 16.4 per cent; Sweden, 12.8 per cent (Fayle, Ernest C., *Sea-Borne Trade*, III, p. 468).

² Adjectives used to describe the submarine bring to mind the action of the Council of the Lateran in 1139, which banned the crossbow as a murderous and barbaric weapon.

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the Naval Board in 1920 calling for ten scout cruisers of 10,000 tons with 8-inch guns,¹ and the United States General Board favoured 10,000-ton cruisers to offset Japanese superiority in small cruisers.² The result of this qualitative limitation which was finally incorporated in the Treaty was similar to that of the qualitative limitation of capital ships. The maximum tonnage became the minimum tonnage and, in the absence of quantitative limitation, building competition in this class of ships was begun.³ The result of this limitation was, therefore, to point the way to a qualitative competition which might not have arisen had no such limitation been imposed.⁴ The danger which prompted Mr. Hughes to introduce this limitation was real, however, and the compromise arrived at with regard to capital ships might have been seriously jeopardized and the balance of power disequibrated if the maximum limit of auxiliary craft—or minimum limit of capital ship—had not been fixed.

The same motive which impelled the delegates to lay down a maximum tonnage and gunnage for auxiliary craft led them to lay a similar limitation on aircraft carriers. An addendum to the original American proposal suggested 27,000 tons as the maximum tonnage for an aircraft carrier and 8 inches as the maximum calibre of gun. In the Treaty the American proposal was accepted with the proviso that any Contracting Party might have, within the total tonnage assigned, no more than two aircraft carriers of 33,000 tons. In view of the experimental nature of aircraft carriers, it was not thought wise to limit the maximum size too strictly. American Admirals, with their eyes set to possible action in the Pacific, were asking for the largest sizes they could get. This rather flexible qualitative limitation of tonnage was ren-

¹ *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1920-1921, p. 43.

² Bywater, "Limitation of Naval Armaments," *loc. cit.*, p. 266.

³ *Vide infra*, pp. 147-151.

⁴ As long as there was no quantitative limitation of auxiliary craft, a competition in their building was to be expected as soon as the funds hitherto spent on capital ship building were liberated through restriction of such building. That a quantitative competition could take place without a simultaneous qualitative competition is unlikely, and therefore the fixing of a maximum limit for auxiliary craft was a wise step.

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dered less likely of exploitation by a complicated system of limitation of gunnage. The maximum calibre of gun in all cases was 8 inches, but the 33,000-ton aircraft carrier could have no more than eight such guns and an unlimited number of 5-inch guns and anti-aircraft guns. On the other hand, the 27,000-ton ship could have, besides the secondary armament, ten 8-inch guns. This prevented the use of the larger ship merely in order to concentrate more gun power. There was also a minimum qualitative limitation for aircraft carriers. No ship under 10,000 tons was considered an aircraft carrier. This minimum limitation served to render somewhat nugatory the quantitative limitation of aircraft carriers for any number of such vessels of 10,000 tons or less could be built outside the allotted tonnage. The Conference had felt that it was not possible to build a satisfactory carrier of 10,000 tons or less,¹ but limitation of minimum tonnage was not actually necessary and its inclusion opened the door for evasion of the quantitative limitation. This defect had to be remedied at the London Naval Conference of 1930.

The Washington Conference eased the diplomatic situation between the United States, Great Britain, and Japan by substituting the Four-Power Treaty for the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and making secure the guarantee of peace thus given by so limiting each navy as to make it supreme in its own sphere of influence, thereby neutralizing its function in diplomacy—the silent pressure it exerts on diplomatic interchange. This result was accomplished by creating a no-man's-land in the Western and Middle Pacific, where the *status quo* in naval bases would be maintained, and by limiting the main units of the battle fleets of each Power on

¹ At the time of the Washington Conference Great Britain had under construction an aircraft carrier, the *Hermes* (10,850), which could have been brought within 10,000 tons without much difficulty. The British Empire Navy possessed in 1932 two seaplane carriers, *Ark Royal* (6,900 tons) and *Albatross* (4,800 tons) of less than 10,000 tons. Italy had one such seaplane carrier, the *Miraglia* (4,891 tons). The Japanese Navy had one small aircraft carrier, *Hosho* (7,740 tons), and one building, *Reijo* (7,600 tons) (Cmd. 4005 of 1932). Due to the huge cost of building and upkeep, the United States and Japan, at the time of writing, are now experimenting with aircraft carriers of 10,000 tons, while the British Admiralty, which has never favoured the large carrier, has come out against it.

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the basis of the *status quo* in immediately effective strength. This balance of security did not affect France or Italy who were drawn into the bargain only because they influenced the strength of the British Navy. But for them, the naval problem was comparatively unimportant, and although they agreed to the limitation of capital ships and aircraft carriers, the need of which they did not feel, they refused to join in the limitation of other craft without such limitation being made part of a whole system of security and disarmament.

The Treaty on the Limitation of Naval Armament established a system of qualitative and quantitative limitations in tonnage and gunnage of capital ships and aircraft carriers, and thus ended the American-Japanese building competition into which the British Empire was inevitably being drawn. These limitations were supplemented by regulations which prevented evasion of their provisions. But the Treaty was not complete, because it omitted the limitation of auxiliary surface craft and submarines. It was the endeavour of British and American diplomacy in the years that followed to fill this lacuna in order to complete the balance of power in the Pacific arrived at in Washington. This was accomplished only in 1930 at the London Naval Conference after years of misunderstanding and distrust and after political events had somewhat eased up the European problem of the British Navy.

The Washington Conference and its results on naval armaments were welcomed in Great Britain. Besides solving the most delicate diplomatic problem of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and having brought about a *détente* in Anglo-American relations, the Washington Conference had stopped the naval building competition in expensive ships and rendered possible a very large cut in naval expenditures at the time when the Geddes Committee had recommended such a cut. The net Naval Estimates for 1922-1923 were £64,883,700, a reduction of £17,595,300 from those of 1921-1922. In introducing the Estimates for 1923-1924, Mr. Amery, First Lord of the Admiralty, stated that the Washington Conference saved Great Britain from £15,000,000 to £20,000,000

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a year.¹ This saving, moreover, was accompanied by greater security. Hector Bywater passed judgment on the Washington Naval Treaty by saying that "the wisdom of any policy relating to national armaments is only to be determined by the degree of security it affords. Judged by that test, our present policy appears to be justified. The Empire is more free from menace than it has been at any other time within living memory, and its safety is no longer wholly dependent on a more or less precarious naval strength."²

Besides drafting the first multilateral naval disarmament Treaty, the Washington Conference accomplished other results of some significance. It was the occasion of the acceptance by Great Britain of the principle of equality with the United States in naval strength. It was also the occasion of Italy's declaration of her naval policy of parity with France. At this Conference the British Government drew its differentiation between cruisers for battle fleet uses and cruisers for commerce protection. Finally, the Conference brought to a head the controversy between France and Great Britain on submarines and the use to which they may be put in case of war. The results of the Washington Conference were summed up from the British point of view by Admiral of the Fleet Lord Wester Wemyss:

"On the one hand we have secured a respite from the heavy financial burden imposed by a big shipbuilding programme; we are assured of a stable naval policy for at least fifteen years; and we hope to have attained the friendship of the United States, and possibly even the approbation of that section of the American Press which has hitherto been so blindly antagonistic to everybody and everything British. On the other hand, we have surrendered our naval supremacy on which up to now the whole fabric of our Empire has been founded; we have lost prestige; we have created another cause of friction with our 'French friends.'"³

¹ 161 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1084.

² *Navies and Nations*, p. 38.

³ "Washington and After," *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 91, p. 409.

CHAPTER II

BRITISH ATTITUDE ON NAVAL DISARMAMENT

(*Continued*)

Naval Disarmament in the League of Nations

WHILE the negotiations of the United States and Great Britain on naval disarmament were taking place and were brought to a successful issue at Washington as a part of the stabilization of the *status quo* in the Pacific, the organs of the League of Nations were endeavouring to arrive at a practicable plan for general disarmament on the basis of the political arrangements of the Covenant. The founders of the League had desired to establish a political system conceived as a "community of power" wherein peace was to be kept by a universal guarantee against the overthrow of the international constitutional order by force. A general reduction and limitation of armaments was to be a result of this guarantee as well as a contribution to its success. The Treaties of Peace were to be the constitutional basis of the international order which the League of Nations was to maintain. Acting through universal guarantees of territorial integrity and provisions for the pacific settlement of international disputes and the reduction and limitation of armaments, the League was to ensure that changes in the constitutional order should be made only by peaceful means. The system of keeping peace set up in the Covenant was dependent upon a previous reduction of armaments and could be counted upon to work smoothly and effectively only when armaments should have been reduced sufficiently to lessen their influence in diplomatic bargaining.

In the plan he presented to the Council of Ten on January 23, 1919, Lloyd George called for the appointment of a commission "to prepare a plan in connection with the League of Nations for a permanent reduction in the burden of military, naval, and aerial forces and armaments."¹ In his Memorandum to

¹ Baker, R. S., *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, I, p. 352.

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M. Clemenceau of March 26, 1919, he outlined the place he assigned to disarmament in the post-war international order. "An essential element, therefore, in the peace settlement is the constitution of the League of Nations as the effective guardian of international right and international liberty throughout the world. If this is to happen, the first thing to do is that the leading members of the League of Nations should arrive at an understanding between themselves in regard to armaments."¹ Wilson also desired that the reduction of armaments should be definitely provided for at the time of the adoption of the Covenant.² General Smuts's project for the League of Nations and all subsequent English and American projects until the Hurst-Miller Draft called for immediate study by the Council of plans for the reduction of armaments on principles laid down in the Covenant itself.³ These proposals met with such opposition that it was agreed to modify them.⁴ Article 8 of the Covenant states merely that the Council shall submit to the Members for their adoption plans for the limitation and reduction of their armaments "to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations."

The failure of the United States to ratify Part I of the Treaty of Versailles entirely vitiated the system of the Covenant. David Hunter Miller had gauged the effect of such an eventuality in a memorandum dated December 12, 1918. He wrote: "The system of the League of Nations is that of a community of power as distinguished from a balance of power. . . . The breaking away from the League of one really great Power, such as the United States, would not result in a conflict between the United States and the rest of the world, but rather would mean a return to the balance of power system, in which some Powers would join with the United States and other Powers would join against it."⁵

¹ Cmd. 2169 of 1924, p. 80. ² Cf. Baker, R. S., *op. cit.*, I, pp. 344-349.

³ Cf. Miller, D. H., *The Drafting of the Covenant*, II.

⁴ *Vide infra*, pp. 265-268.

⁵ Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris*, II, pp. 262-264. Writing in 1928, Miller said: "Of course it is a fact, which I would not only admit but assert, that the League without the United States as a Member had not been either *in esse* or *in posse* the League that was looked forward to in 1919 (*The Drafting of the Covenant*, I, p. 550).

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The defection of the United States did indeed entail the destruction of the system of community of power. The universality which was fundamental to the League system had been destroyed, and the League became predominantly European. Great Britain found herself in the anomalous position of trying to keep on good terms with both the United States and the League, thus further contributing to the establishment of a balance of power within the League and the entire breakdown of the League system. In spite of this, the League of Nations continued to exist and to function on the basis of a Covenant which had lost all meaning. Not until the Sino-Japanese Dispute of 1931 did it become quite clear, not that the original Covenant was dead but that it had never existed.

Upon the refusal of the United States to adhere to the Covenant, the Members of the League examined and analysed the system of preserving the balance of power as instituted in the Covenant to see whether it still afforded sufficient guarantees for the peaceful maintenance of the international constitutional order to justify the reduction and limitation of national armaments. Resting, as this system now ultimately rested, upon the armaments of each State and the willingness of the State to use them in cases not only where its direct and immediate interests were not clear but also where the danger of serious clash with non-Members was real, it was not likely to lead to disarmament without stricter mutual undertakings to ensure that the force of the whole would be brought to bear against the force of a delinquent Member even in the face of the opposition of non-Members of the League. This was all the more true as the League system did not abolish war but left open the possibility of recourse to it as the ultimate method of settling a dispute. This use of armed force or war admitted by the Covenant was more likely to occur in cases where the disparity in armaments between the States was great. The "gap" in the Covenant thus permitted the continued use of armaments in diplomacy, as the ultimate means of enforcing national policy.

Under these conditions "the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of inter-

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national obligations" to which armaments could be limited was so raised that no reduction in existing armaments maintained by the Members was possible. British policy was to advocate reduction of armaments while still maintaining the existing relation between the armaments of various States. Such reduction would increase the sense of security by diminishing the size of the forces of each nation. To this thesis the French opposed that of strict mutual guarantees of security preliminary to any reduction of armaments. These theses were eventually co-ordinated and the history of the reduction and limitation of armaments in the League of Nations is the story of attempts to restore the equilibrium envisaged in the Covenant through the use of stricter mutual guarantees than could be found in the Covenant, paralleled by a reduction and limitation of armaments.

The first attempt of the Council to fulfil its task under the disarmament Articles of the Covenant was the institution, on May 19, 1920, of the Permanent Advisory Commission for Military, Naval, and Air Questions. This Commission, composed of military, naval, and air delegates of the countries represented on the Council, was instructed by this body to study the technical questions involved in carrying out Articles 1 and 8 of the Covenant. From the first its main task has been to advise on the armaments of the States applying for membership in the League, and it has contributed little to the solution of the problems of limitation and reduction of armaments beyond giving expert advice on technical questions as they have arisen in the Council, the Assembly, or other League Commissions.¹

The first Assembly of the League of Nations, held from

¹ During the discussion on the naval needs of the small countries bordering on the Baltic the British representative in the Naval Sub-Commission voted against allowing submarines to these countries for the reason that, in view of the unsettled conditions which then existed, the possession of submarines would be particularly likely to add to the commission of hostile acts which it is the object of the League to prevent. The close proximity of the countries involved precluded the imposition of an individual tonnage limitation to ensure the purely defensive use of the submarine (Report of the Permanent Advisory Commission to the Council, October 22, 1920. *Official Journal*, 1920, No. 8, p. 42).

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November to December 1920, and its Sixth Committee discussed the problem of the reduction and limitation of armaments, criticized the work of the Permanent Advisory Commission and recommended the creation of a new temporary commission, composed of specialists in the various social sciences to study the problems of disarmament. At its meeting of December 14, 1920, the Assembly recommended to the Council "to submit for the consideration of the Governments the acceptance of an undertaking not to exceed, for the first two financial years following the next financial year, the sum total of expenditure on the military, naval, and air services provided for in the latter budget." This undertaking was subject to important and reasonable derogations.¹ The recommendation was approved by the Council at its meeting of February 25, 1921, and forwarded to the Governments by the Secretary-General.

The recommendation of the Assembly was the same as that contained in the Mouravieff circular of 1898-1899 and discussed at the First Hague Peace Conference of 1899. It was now, as then, submitted in lieu of more direct limitations of armaments. At the time of the Hague Conference the British Government had refused to be bound by such an obligation.² But the war had changed the financial conditions of Britain. The recommendations of the Geddes Committee on National Expenditure called for serious reductions in expenditure on the fighting services. In its reply of June 2, 1921, to the Secretary-General, the British Government, therefore, expressed its full adherence to the spirit of the Assembly recommendation. It had already reduced its expenditure substantially and hoped to do so again within the next two years, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Assembly resolution. This adherence was, of course, made subject to similar action of the other Governments.³

The Second Assembly met before positive action had been taken on its recommendation regarding military, naval, and air

¹ The obligation could be broken (a) if the Council of the League asked for military contributions under Article 16 and (b) in case of exceptional conditions reported to the Council. *A.* 81, 1921 (*C.* 321, 1921), pp. 4-5.

² *Vide supra*, p. 50.

³ *A.* 31, 1922 (*C.* 631, 1922), pp. 4, 29.

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budgets, and it, therefore, renewed these recommendations. Replying to a second letter from the Secretary-General, the British Government wrote on March 21, 1922, that the economies it had envisaged had been carried out. At the Third Assembly, on September 11, 1922, Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, representing the British Empire in the Third Commission, favoured the renewal every year of the proposal for budgetary limitation until it should be adopted.¹ Lord Balfour, however, expressed the view, in the 23rd Session of the Council, on January 30, 1923, that the principle of making expenditure a rough test of armaments was open to question. Experience had shown that expenditure as a means of comparison was utterly misleading.² The proposal of the Assembly was eventually dropped because the answers of the Governments were unfavourable.

The Temporary Mixed Commission on Armaments was set up at the instance of the First Assembly to search for means of reducing and limiting armaments. This Commission was charged with the study of special questions relating to armaments and the conduct of statistical inquiries into the state of the armaments of the Members to provide for the exchange of information foreseen in the last paragraph of Article 8 of the Covenant. The answers to the questionnaire which the Commission set up form the basis of the data published in the Armaments Yearbook. While carrying on this inquiry, the Temporary Mixed Commission, at the instance of the Second Assembly, asked each Member of the League to furnish "a statement of the considerations it may wish to urge in regard to the requirements of its national security, its international obligations, its geographical situation, and its special conditions." The British Government answered on July 22, 1922, that, as far as the naval situation was concerned, its requirements were well known. The safeguarding of its lines of communications depended on the Navy, and its needs in this respect were greater than those of any other nation. The British Government had already agreed, at the Washington Conference,

¹ *Records of the Third Assembly*, Minutes of the Third Commission, pp. 10-11.

² *Official Journal*, 1923, p. 209.

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"to the reduction of her naval power to the lowest limits compatible with these responsibilities and no further reduction could be agreed to."¹

The Temporary Mixed Commission examined plans for the reduction and limitation of armaments. After the Washington Conference, it studied the possibility of extension of the principles of the Washington Naval Treaty to the Members of the League possessing capital ships or aircraft carriers. The Temporary Mixed Commission sent the problem to the Permanent Advisory Commission for technical advice and this Commission prepared a draft convention for submission to the Members at an international conference. This conference took place in Rome in 1924 as a meeting of the Naval Sub-Commission of the Permanent Advisory Commission to which were joined representatives of naval States possessing capital ships, including Russia. This meeting of the Sub-Commission failed utterly of its object.

This attempt and those of the Temporary Mixed Commission to reach agreement on a plan for the limitation and reduction of armaments made it clear that the Covenant was not considered by the Members a sufficient guarantee to enable them to give up their armaments. They demanded greater security before disarming, and the trend of procedure was to relegate disarmament to a secondary position and to draft a convention which would offer enough security to justify subsequent reduction and limitation of armaments. To security was later added arbitration. The Third, Fourth, and Fifth Assembly, the Temporary Mixed Commission, and the Co-ordination Commission which succeeded it, worked on the problem and evolved the famous Resolution XIV of the Assembly of 1922, the Treaty of Mutual Assistance and the Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes. After the failure of this Protocol, and with the prospects of a limited agreement at Locarno, the Sixth Assembly (1925) decided once more to attack directly the problem of disarmament under Article 8 of the Covenant, hoping that the political arrangement reached at Locarno could be stabilized by some measure of

¹ A. 31, 1922 (C. 631, 1922), p. 50.

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disarmament, however slight. At the recommendation of the Assembly, therefore, the Council instituted the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference.

The Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference was composed of representatives of the Governments Members of the Council to whom were added representatives of specially interested nations. Its task was to prepare the mechanics of a disarmament convention so that the Conference to be called eventually would have only to come to agreement upon the figures to be inserted in the framework of the convention thus drafted. It discussed the principles applicable, in the present state of political intercourse, to the limitation and reduction of armaments. This discussion was based on a questionnaire drawn up by the Committee of the Council from a French and a British memorandum. These memoranda revealed the difference in points of view between the French and British delegations which persisted throughout the work of the Preparatory Commission and manifested itself in the World Disarmament Conference. It is the same difference in national military policy which became evident at Versailles during the discussions of the peace terms for Germany. While concessions enabled practical solutions to be reached in the Preparatory Commission, this fundamental difference in points of view persisted and cropped up on every occasion.

The British were interested in an empirical limitation of such armaments as could be used immediately at a given moment to wage war. This attitude was dictated by the technical organization of their national armaments which is particularly dominated by the naval arm and the grand strategy developed from this situation. Possession of a large navy has enabled the British Government to conduct war in a limited form. By establishing command of the seas and thereby preventing invasion of Great Britain, the Navy freed the small British Army for attack against a limited object, *i.e.* some territory where the exercise of the command of the seas could support military operations. In the wars with France this was usually accomplished by attacking New France

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(Canada), India, or the French West Indies. There the British Army met with inferior troops, and the main armed forces of the French were prevented by the activities of the British Navy from supporting their garrisons abroad. The eminent naval historian, Sir Julian S. Corbett, wrote of the conquest of Canada:

“ . . . it is the leading case of a weak military Power succeeding by the use of the limited form of war in forcing its will upon a strong one, and succeeding because it was able by naval action to secure its home defence and isolate the territorial object.”¹

In the Coalition Wars the same strategy was followed. Supporting their Continental Allies by financial help, the British Government directed their Army against limited objectives while the Navy exercised command of the seas in such a way as to cut off completely the enemy's maritime communications.

This grand strategy called for a small striking force and a large reserve of strength. It would prove unavailing, however, in case of sudden overpowering attack before command of the seas could be established or while it was in dispute. The danger to Great Britain, therefore, from a strategical point of view, would lie in a large enemy force immediately available for striking a quick decisive blow. Basing its policy on considerations of national safety, the British Government advocated such limitation of armaments as would impair seriously the possibility of any country striking a quick and sudden blow and, at the same time, leave untouched the elements of force required for the execution of British strategy. While Britain held predominance at sea, direct limitation of tonnage and gunnage of each ship worked to her advantage in rendering impossible a quick sudden contest for command of the seas, while similar direct limitation of land effectives and material rendered impossible any overpowering surprise attack. Such limitation would leave the British Navy in command of the seas and allow sufficient striking force for a war of limited object.

The French, on the other hand, were interested in limiting the “power to wage war,” *i.e.* all that can be brought to bear

¹ Corbett, Julian S., *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, p. 53.

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upon hostilities at any time during the length of these hostilities. In opposition to the British or Maritime grand strategy, there is the Continental grand strategy based on Clausewitz's interpretation of Napoleon's way of warfare. The contiguity of territory in Continental Europe rendered almost impossible the form of limited warfare practised by Great Britain. Continental strategy, therefore, has tended to the other extreme of absolute warfare, which was supposed to have been instituted by Napoleon. Together with other followers of this Continental grand strategy, the French military experts, and particularly Marshal Foch, subscribed to the dominant theories found in the first books of Clausewitz, *viz.* (a) the theory of the absolute war with each nation ready to fight to the death; (b) the theory that the enemy must be attacked persistently until overthrown; (c) the theory that one must always be on the offensive, and (d) that the enemy forces and not his territory are the true object of that offensive.¹

This form of strategy called for a strong force which could take the offensive immediately and strike a decisive blow. Moreover, this force would have to be kept on the offensive until the enemy was thoroughly defeated. The resources of the whole nation would therefore be called on to oppose those of the enemy. The greatest danger to France, under this form of strategy, came from a country with greater reserve power which could withstand her first attack and then overcome her by sheer weight of war power. With the strongest army in the world, both in personnel and material, the French were intent upon maintaining this weapon which might bring victory by a decisive, blow and therefore opposed all limitation of immediately available armaments.

¹ Clausewitz, regarded as the most famous exponent of absolute warfare, did draw a difference between limited and absolute war. In Book VIII of *On War* (p. viii) he defined the two natures of war as follows: "First, those in which the object is the *overthrow of the enemy*, whether it be we aim at his political destruction or merely at disarming him and forcing him to conclude peace on our terms; and secondly, those in which our object is *merely to make some conquests on the frontiers of his country*, either for the purpose of retaining them permanently or of turning them to account as a matter of exchange in settling terms of peace" (quoted in Corbett, *op. cit.*, p. 46. Cf. *ibid.*, Part I; Liddell Hart, *The British Way in Warfare*; Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, pp. 605-682).

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As France has a lower birth-rate than her neighbours and a comparatively weaker reserve of material, a limitation of "war potential," all that can be brought to bear upon the hostilities at any time during the length of hostilities, would operate for her greater security by weakening the evident strength of her enemies. Applied to naval armaments, this conception of disarmament gave complete freedom to the French to prepare any striking force they might think requisite to challenge by surprise British command of the seas.

The difference between the French and British conceptions of the nature of war and of the strategy to be followed in war gave rise to a difference in conception of the armaments to be limited and the methods to be followed in limiting them. After a disagreement at Paris settled by the application of both methods of disarmament to Germany, the French and British conceptions again opposed each other in the Preparatory Commission. The work of this Commission may be summed up as an attempt to strike a balance between these two views of fundamental strategical needs, the delegations allying themselves now with one side, now with the other, in attempts to secure for themselves the best advantages possible in the diplomatic chess-game.¹

The British attitude in the Preparatory Commission reflected a careful study of the bearing of possible solutions of the disarmament problem upon British policy. The subject was considered by a Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence presided over by Lord Cecil. This Sub-Committee virtually drew up the instructions for the British delegation. In doing so, it was actuated by the same considerations of the geographical, economic, and political situation of Great Britain which have underlain all expressions of British foreign policy, and it formulated a policy closely following that of the past. In

¹ The interesting position of the delegations as indicated by their stand on the various issues both in Sub-Commission A and the Preparatory Commission was made the subject of a statistical study by R. A. Chaput in *The Work of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, 1932, pp. 141-147, manuscript in the Syracuse University Library (cf. Beyle, Herman C., *The Analysis and Classification of Attribute-Cluster-Blocs*, Chicago, 1931).

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the First Session of the Preparatory Commission, held from May 18 to 26, 1926, Lord Cecil, representing the British Empire, made a statement of British naval policy which ran along the same lines as the statements made by Mr. Balfour at the Washington Naval Conference. He said that:

"In the case of the Navy there is no doubt a certain element of—I will not call it competition, but dependence on the size of other navies. That was very carefully considered from the point of view of certain kinds of ships at the Washington Conference, which ended in an agreement which was very warmly welcomed in my country. The Washington Conference, however, only dealt with certain kinds of ships. It is possible that further agreements may be made in respect of submarines and cruisers, but I ought to point out that the number of cruisers in the British Navy is also largely a question of overseas commitments and not of the size of foreign navies, or only very slightly a question of their size. While the number of cruisers may therefore not come within the scope of the question, their size undoubtedly does, and there is no reason why by general agreement the size of cruisers should not be diminished."¹

Lord Cecil thus reiterated the interpretation of the "One-Power Standard" to mean parity with the strongest, plus what cruisers are absolutely necessary to protect trade and communications.

In Sub-Commission A, which had been delegated by the Preparatory Commission to study the technical aspects of the methods of limiting and reducing armaments and to adduce the technical reasons for or against a given mode of limitation, the British naval experts brought out all the principles of limitation best calculated to safeguard Britain's naval interests. Being the strongest naval power in the world, Great Britain's obvious interest was the standardization of the *status quo*. Any system which limited both the number and tonnage of each ship would accomplish this standardization. The British naval experts, therefore, insisted upon this method of limitation and reduction of naval armaments and were supported in their argument by the fact that it was the

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series II, p. 14.

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method applied to Germany in Part V of the Treaty of Versailles and put into practice in the Washington Naval Treaty. They opposed any global limitation as uncertain and unlikely to stop naval competition. The only way to end naval competition was to strike a balance among the fleets as fighting units, and this could be done effectively only through limitation by classes. Auxiliary factors could also be limited such as number and size of guns and torpedoes. The British experts, on the other hand, felt it useless to limit naval personnel as personnel was automatically controlled by the number of ships.¹

The methods of limitation advocated by the British naval experts in Sub-Commission A found concrete expression in the model draft convention presented by Lord Cecil at the Third Session of the Preparatory Commission (March 21 to April 26, 1927) to serve as a basis of discussion. In this draft convention, the British delegation proposed to divide naval material into nine classes or categories: capital ships (battleships and battle cruisers), coast defence vessels, cruisers, aircraft carriers, destroyers, including torpedo-boat destroyers and flotilla leaders, torpedo boats, including coastal motor boats, submarines, large and small, sloops and minesweepers, etc., and river gunboats. These ships were to be limited by fixing a quantitative tonnage limitation for each category and the number of ships in it, as well as a qualitative limitation of the individual maximum tonnage and gunnage of each unit. The size of torpedoes was also limited. In presenting this convention, Lord Cecil made it clear that he was convinced this method was essential for a large naval Power. The British delegation would not insist on it for other navies as long as "every one shall know, from the outset, what they are to expect in the naval armaments of other countries."² It was the element of uncertainty and surprise in global tonnage limitation to which the British delegation objected. The French, on the other hand, advocated their theory based upon total or global tonnage of all

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Report of Sub-Commission A.

² *Ibid.*, Series IV, pp. 11-12.

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naval material, to insure maximum possibility of transfer from one category to the other.

The disagreement between the two countries dominated the third session of the Preparatory Commission. It first manifested itself on the question of limitation of naval effectives. The British Government held that limitation of naval material operated at the same time as a limitation of personnel. The French, on the contrary, adopted the attitude they had adopted at Versailles regarding the naval disarmament of Germany that limitation of naval personnel is necessary if limitation of land personnel is not to be illusory. Lord Cecil admitted the force of this argument and, after asking for fresh instructions on the question, accepted the French proposal. On limitation of material, however, there was no agreement. The French sought the possibility of concentrating their tonnage in torpedo craft, an eventuality which the British Admiralty was determined to avoid at all cost.

The French delegation offered a compromise providing that limitation of global tonnage should be laid down in the Convention, but that each nation should submit its future naval building programme at the time of signing the Convention and this programme should not be modified except after one year after the date of notification to the Secretary-General of intended modifications. This proposal eliminated much of the element of uncertainty in the previous French plan, but it still left the way open for serious naval building competition with resulting unrest and distrust. The British Government could not accept the proposal. It renewed its original observation that it would consider anxiously the case of smaller navies which desired a freer system than that of limitation of tonnage by categories. The deadlock persisted and the Preparatory Commission finished the first reading of the Draft Convention without either the French or British texts being accepted. Possibility of accord was in sight, however, as President Coolidge had already issued his invitation to the signatories of the Washington Naval Treaty to attend a conference at Geneva in June 1927 to discuss the problems left unsettled by the Washington Conference.

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Naval Competition after the Washington Conference

The Washington Conference of 1921-1922 had been successful in striking a satisfactory balance of power in the Pacific, and the limitation of naval armaments in Great Britain, the United States, and Japan was a part of this larger settlement. The limitation could not be applied to ships other than capital ships and aircraft carriers, because the British Navy plays a double role. It safeguards the world interests of the British Empire and the European interests of Great Britain. In European diplomatic bargainings for the fulfilment of national policies, torpedo craft and anti-torpedo craft were playing important parts and their limitation depended upon a general European agreement. As no solution to the European problem of the British Navy was offered at Washington, the full application of the balance-of-power agreement in the Pacific to all naval armaments of the countries immediately concerned had to be postponed until such time as the British Government found it possible to conduct its European diplomacy without having to rely to so great an extent on the prestige value of large armaments. Even then, the difficulties inherent in the British situation raised technical differences which it took years to iron out and the solution finally proposed was adopted only with reservations.

In Europe, after the first wild elation of victory expressed in the "khaki elections" of 1918, the British Government endeavoured to secure a moderate peace and prevent France entirely crushing Germany. When the United States refused to ratify the Guarantee Treaty and the British Treaty was thus automatically made void, France, to retrieve her security, sought to obtain complete hegemony in Europe and to prevent the rehabilitation of Germany. Great Britain, in a state of financial and economic exhaustion, looked for salvation to a rapid economic recovery in Europe and opposed French policy as retarding this recovery. She therefore placed her influence on the opposite side of the European balance of power to prevent France acquiring complete ascendancy in European affairs. Everything which could weigh down the balance

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on one side or the other was brought to bear in this diplomatic tourney, and naval armaments played no small part. After the Genoa Conference, however, and the formation of another European bloc to oppose the French, the British Government assumed again as much as possible its policy of isolation and the French submarine programme ceased to play so large a part in European diplomacy. The rivalry continued and influenced British naval programmes. It no longer constituted a threat, however, and it was used by the French in bargaining with the British for support of the French thesis of the reduction and limitation of armaments.

Ever since the days of Admiral Aube and the younger naval school, the torpedo had been advocated in France as a means of breaking British naval supremacy, which rested particularly on gun power.¹ The events of the war had convinced the French Admiralty of the power of the torpedo and French naval building orientated itself along the lines of torpedo-carrying craft and, particularly, of submarines.² The political significance of this building programme was made clear at Washington in 1921 by the attitude of the French delegation toward limitation of submarines. Without security guarantees the French Government was unwilling to abandon its naval programme, which not only added to the weight of French opinion in diplomacy, but also

¹ This aim was also that of the pioneers of the submarines: David Bushnell with his *Turtle* in 1777, Robert Fulton and his *Nautilus* in 1801, and the father of the modern submarine, John P. Holland, and his *Fenian Ram* in the 1880's (Sims, Rear-Admiral William S., *Victory at Sea*, Chap. VIII; Lake, Simon, *The Submarine in War and Peace*).

² This fact, coupled with the French refusal at Washington to disarm on land, made it diplomatically imperative for the French Government to accept the limitation of capital ships and aircraft carriers. This acceptance was all the easier because the French Admiralty had no use for either class of ships and did not build a capital ship until the German Government had built the *Deutschland*. Capitaine A. Delpierre, F.N., writes, "In regard to capital ships, France, as a whole, may be said to have been surprised on learning the first claims formulated by the French delegation at Washington. In addition to the fact that the general public since the Great War has no longer any great confidence in battleships, the financial situation does not allow of any of these being laid down" ("The French Navy in the War and After the War," *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1923, p. 105).

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provided a lever to induce the British Government to give guarantees of security to France.

The British Cabinet was so concerned over the likelihood of Franco-British naval building competition that it concurred unanimously in the statement of Lloyd George to M. Briand at Cannes on January 4, 1922, offering a guarantee against German aggression in exchange for a friendly understanding of questions at issue and a consultation between the Admiralties as to their mutual naval programmes. In this statement, Lloyd George said:

“With regard to the safety of France against invasion, Great Britain will regard this as an interest of her own, and is therefore prepared to undertake that in the event of unprovoked German aggression against French soil the British people will place their forces on her side. . . .

“With regard to submarines, they fully understand that the divergence between the French and British views on the subject may be due to different ideas of the uses which submarines can serve. The British opinion, however, based on four years’ war experience, is that submarines are effective only against merchant ships and ineffectual otherwise as instrument either of attack or defence. British opinion would inevitably insist on a heavy programme of anti-submarine craft, if the French submarine programme were carried out, and the two countries would thus be launched on a course of competitive naval construction. The British Government cannot disguise the fact that any such development would react seriously on British sentiment towards France, and on French sentiment towards Great Britain. Britain’s sea communications are to Britain what France’s eastern frontier is to France. Naval competition in any form between Great Britain and France would corrode goodwill. His Majesty’s Government, therefore, propose, as the condition of the Treaty and *entente* which they contemplate that the Admiralties of the two countries shall confer together regarding their naval programmes in order that all competition in shipbuilding may be avoided between them.”¹

This proposal for an *entente* with France, which might receive the support of the whole British Empire,² was made by the British Government the basis of an equilibrium in Europe. Lloyd George’s memorandum indicated the problem:

¹ Cmd. 2169 of 1924, pp. 116–118; *The Times*, January 12, 1922.

² Cmd. 2169, p. 117.

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"Great Britain fully recognizes France's ground for anxiety, and desires to do all in her power to allay it, but she cannot agree to postponing the question of the reconstruction of Europe, while meeting France's desires in regard to her reparations and her security."¹

The British Government undertook to calm French fears by offering a definite unilateral guarantee of assistance in case of unprovoked German aggression against French soil. Such a Treaty would have necessitated complete *entente* on the economic reconstruction of Europe, peace with Turkey, the internationalization of Tangier, and naval building programmes. On the basis of this mutual *entente*, the two Powers would have worked together at a forthcoming economic conference to promote the reconstruction of Europe and to obtain the signature by all European nations of a joint undertaking to refrain from aggression against their neighbours. The British Government hoped to make the *entente* with France, in which abandonment of naval competition was to be an important factor, the basis of a wider equilibrium in Europe where France and Great Britain would work together for economic and political peace.

To this offer of a political settlement of the outstanding differences between France and Great Britain which were dividing Europe in two camps the French Government replied by demanding a bilateral guarantee of assistance with the British guarantee applying also to any infringement of the demilitarized zones, and further regulation by agreement of their respective military, naval, and air forces.² This amounted to a pre-war treaty of alliance wherein each country agreed to defend the other in case of unprovoked aggression and consulted on the armaments both should maintain. Poincaré considered the British

¹ Cmd. 2169, p. 116.

² Returning from an interview with Poincaré in Paris on June 22, 1922, Lloyd George to Lord Riddell: "He said, 'Poincaré is foolish!' He repeated this two or three times most emphatically. 'He actually proposed that there should be a military convention between Great Britain and France, defining the size of the respective armies and other military details. I told him plainly that our people would never agree to anything of this sort, and that if this were insisted upon, our offer of guarantee would be withdrawn'" (*Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary at the Peace Conference and After*, p. 349).

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offer "as a mystification without any real value, since if circumstances arose such as occurred in 1914, and Belgium and France were invaded by Germany, England, in her own interests, would be obliged to take the same action as then."¹ The conversations were eventually dropped as the British Government would not commit itself to the French demands. A definite commitment which would only confirm French hegemony in Europe ran counter to the whole tradition of British foreign policy and could not be accepted. This failure to reach an agreement with France strengthened the Admiralty in its resolution to safeguard Imperial communications by all the means at its disposal. In this resolution it was warmly seconded by the Dominions, especially Australia and New Zealand, who in the Imperial Conferences of 1921, 1923, and 1926 stressed the necessity of developing and protecting Imperial communications.

It was apparent at the Washington Conference that failure to reach an agreement on the reduction and limitation of auxiliary craft would lead to another naval building competition. As Senator Schanzer, representing Italy, stated on December 28, 1921, "it was impossible not to realize that the absence of such agreement would give new impetus to the competition in naval armament respecting auxiliary craft. . . ."² This was also perceived in England. Lord Grey of Fallodon, speaking at Bristol before the League of Nations Union, on January 10, 1922, referred as follows to the difference between the French and British delegations on the subject of submarines: "The result is that as things are at present, it looks as if France and we are going to build submarines against each other."³ Vice-Admiral G. A. Ballard, at a dinner at the Clothworkers' Hall on May 4, 1922, remarked that one of the things left undone at Washington which might cause trouble in the near future was the question of submarines.⁴ This apprehension was shared in the United States. On June 19, 1922, during the debates in the Senate on the United States Naval

¹ Lord Hardinge to the Earl of Balfour, Paris, June 16, 1922. Cmd. 2169 of 1924, p. 166.

² *The Conference on the Limitation of Armaments*, p. 576.

³ *The Times*, January 11, 1922.

⁴ *Ibid.*, May 5, 1922.

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Appropriation Bill, Senator Borah claimed that naval competition still continued among the nations of the world particularly in submarines.¹

After the war, the maritime nations experimented with submarines for fleet work and vied with one another in the size and equipment of their submarines. While competitive building of submarines was simultaneous with competitive building of capital ships it had been completely overshadowed by the larger issue. It was not until the Washington Conference had failed to agree upon any limitation of auxiliary craft, except for the 10,000 tons maximum tonnage limit and 8-inch maximum gunnage, that naval writers called attention to qualitative competition in submarines and discussed the possibility of the cruiser submarine of 10,000 tons.² While most submarines were of small tonnage, the "Return of the Fleets" for February 1, 1923, showed that Great Britain possessed three submarines, *K 22*, *K 14*, and *K 12*, of $\frac{1,880}{2,560}$ tons³ and three monitor submarines, *M 1*, *M 2*, and *M 3*, of $\frac{1,600}{1,950}$ tons which latter carried one 12-inch gun beside auxiliary armament and four torpedo tubes. For technical reasons, the 12-inch gun was later replaced by a seaplane. These submarines had been laid down at the end of the war. Great Britain had building *K 26*, launched in 1919, of $\frac{2,140}{2,770}$ tons and *X 1*, launched in 1921, of $\frac{2,780}{3,600}$ tons and a speed of $\frac{19.5}{9}$ knots. The largest submarine in the French Navy was an ex-German ship of $\frac{2,000}{3,000}$ tons.⁴ In 1927, however, France started to build the *Surcouf*, a cruiser submarine of a surface displacement of 2,880 tons and a surface speed of 18 knots with 8-inch guns.⁵ In the following

¹ *The Times*, June 21, 1922.

² Cf. de Feo, Commandante V., R.I.N., "The Future of the Submarine," *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1926, pp. 115-125; *The Times*, December 27, 1923.

³ The top figure indicates tonnage or speed when on surface, the bottom figure represents the tonnage or speed when submerged.

⁴ *Parliamentary Sessional Paper* [67] of 1923.

⁵ "Return of the Fleet," 1927, Cmd. 2809.

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year, the United States laid down *V 4*, a submarine minelayer of $\frac{2,890}{4,000}$ tons with a speed of $\frac{15}{8}$ knots, and *V 5* and *V 6* of $\frac{2,730}{3,960}$ tons with a speed of $\frac{17}{8.5}$ knots.¹

Quantitative competition proceeded side by side with qualitative competition. From November 12, 1921, the date of the first meeting of the Washington Conference, until May 21, 1924, Japan laid down 17 submarines and had 20 projected although not yet laid down. Similarly, France laid down 9 submarines and had 42 projected within the same period, while the United States laid down 1 and projected 7, and Great Britain laid down only one.² Of submarines laid down from February 1922 until December 1, 1929, immediately before the London Naval Conference, Great Britain completed 7 and had 16 building; the United States had 1 completed and 5 building; Japan 18 completed and 7 building; France 21 completed and 47 building; and Italy 18 completed and 14 building.³

Building competition was even more marked in the case of light cruisers. Here, however, a qualitative limitation already existed within the realm of possibility and all cruiser building was obliged to confine itself to a maximum tonnage of 10,000 tons and gunnage of 8-inch. Immediately after the Washington Conference, the Japanese Government revised the building programme for auxiliary craft which it had already adopted. It cut the total tonnage to be laid down and changed the specifications of the ships. It thus provided for eight light cruisers not exceeding 10,000 tons standard displacement.⁴ By February 1, 1923, the Japanese had laid down two cruisers of the *Furutaka* Class, 7,100 tons with six 8-inch guns, and had projected two more of that class and four other cruisers of 10,000 tons and with ten 8-inch guns.⁵ These were not all laid down by April 1924.⁶ By

¹ "Return of the Fleets," 1928, Cmd. 3034.

² 173 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 2215-2216.

³ "Return of the Fleets," 1930, Cmd. 3464.

⁴ *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1923, p. 44.

⁵ *Parliamentary Sessional Paper* [67] of 1923.

⁶ 172 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1328-1330.

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December 1, 1929, they had completed the four *Furutaka* (*Kimugasa, Aoba, Kako, and Furutaka*), almost completed eight more 10,000-ton cruisers with ten 8-inch guns and planned an additional four.¹ This programme of cruiser building further increased the disparity between the Japanese and American fleets in light cruisers. Already in 1920, Admiral Badger had recommended to the American Naval Board to build 10,000-ton cruisers to offset the Japanese advantage.² By the end of 1922, the American Navy General Board had prepared a programme calling for sixteen light cruisers within the 10,000-ton limit although it did not then propose its adoption by Congress.³ Eight of these cruisers, to be of 10,000 tons, were definitely proposed to Congress for authorization on February 2, 1924.⁴

In view of French submarine building near the most important focal point of British communications, and the Japanese cruiser and submarine programme which was disquieting the Pacific Dominions regarding the safety of imperial communications, the British Admiralty resolved not to let Great Britain grow weaker in commerce-protecting vessels. It therefore proposed strict replacement of over-aged and worn-out cruisers by new modern construction. The first intimation of this replacement programme was given by Stanley Baldwin in a speech at Plymouth on October 25, 1923, in which he stated that the Government had decided, in order to relieve unemployment, to lay down several cruisers of the County Class which were long overdue for replacement.⁵ At the annual Guildhall Banquet on November 9, 1923, Admiral of the Fleet Lord Beatty explained the cruiser policy of the Admiralty.

“At the Washington Conference the strength of the navies of the Great Powers was definitely laid down, so far as capital ships and air-

¹ “Return of the Fleets,” 1930, Cmd. 3464 and Cmd. 3805 of 1931.

² *Vide supra*, p. 122.

³ *The Times*, December 15, 1922.

⁴ 174 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 417.

⁵ *The Times*, October 26, 1923. The cruisers of the County Class displaced 10,850 tons and carried four 7·5-inch guns, six 6-inch guns, and two torpedo tubes (170 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 723).

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craft carriers were concerned. It was recognized that our peculiar situation as a scattered Empire admitted of special treatment in the matter of cruisers. . . .

"Owing to the need for economy, however, our cruiser building programme has not kept pace with our needs. The older vessels are wearing out, and they must be replaced by new and up-to-date ships. The Prime Minister has already announced the forthcoming replacement of the County Class, which were first laid down specially for trade protection in 1899."¹

These cruisers were embodied in a programme announced by Mr. Amery, First Lord of the Admiralty, in the House of Commons on January 21, 1924, as part of the replacement in auxiliary craft made necessary by the wear and tear of war service and the rigid economies practised since the Armistice. These replacements were spaced so as to spread the work over a great many years and keep up employment in the dockyard towns where there had been difficulties in adjustment to a peace production after the production *à outrance* of the war period. The programme outlined by Mr. Amery called for fifty-two cruisers, eight of which were to be laid down in 1924 and an equal number in 1925 and in 1926.² The change in Government in February 1924 delayed this programme. Mr. MacDonald's Cabinet, immediately and hurriedly, examined the conditions of the Navy in order to estimate the necessity of the building programme of the Baldwin Government. It decided in view of unemployment to proceed immediately with the building of five cruisers and two

¹ *The Times*, November 10, 1923.

² In submitting this programme, Mr. Amery said: "Practically the whole of our light cruisers will become obsolete and worn out in the course of the next twelve years. To replace them and to maintain our cruiser establishment in strength sufficient to meet the requirements of our Fleets, and the protection of our commerce, we shall have to lay down in the course of the next ten years, a total of some fifty-two cruisers in all, in other words an average of five a year. . . .

"What we had therefore proposed was to lay down immediately eight light cruisers of the type that, under the Washington Treaty, has become the standard type adopted by all great naval Powers, namely, vessels of 10,000 tons armed with 8-inch guns." He also proposed building that year 3 submarines, 1 submarine depot ship, 2 destroyers, 1 destroyer depot ship, 2 gunboats, 1 ship for the Persian Gulf, 1 aircraft carrier, and 1 minelaying vessel (169 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 607-608).

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destroyers and to drop the rest of the programme until the Cabinet should have more leisure to examine the problem in detail.¹ In supporting this replacement programme, Mr. MacDonald stated that ten cruisers of the British Navy were already over fifteen years old and seventeen more would be over fifteen years old within the next five years. He believed in disarmament but not by letting the ships rot.² Five cruisers of 10,000 tons with 8-inch guns were, therefore, laid down in 1924, the first to be built by Great Britain since the Washington Conference.

After adopting this initial programme of five cruisers, the MacDonald Government proceeded to examine the needs of the Navy in order to determine the course of future replacement. Before it could come to any conclusion, the Government fell and a Conservative Ministry took up the unfinished work. The Navy Estimates for 1925-1926 contained no provision for new construction although they did provide for the continuance of work already under way.³ The Government Committee to consider naval needs and the new building programme met from twenty-five to thirty times in 1925.⁴ Its recommendations were embodied in the announcement to the House of Commons made by the Prime Minister on July 23, 1925. Mr. Baldwin stated that the peaceful outlook of the world and the absence of any naval antagonism among the Great Powers had made it possible for the Government to modify the proposals for new construction which had been adumbrated two years before. The Government, therefore, considered that the requirements of fleet replacement would be met "if two cruisers are laid down in October of this year and two more in February; and by an annual construction of three cruisers thereafter, during the normal life of this Parliament." Some of the cruisers were to be of 10,000 tons, others of the new 8,000 tons type, all with 8-inch guns. Beginning with the financial year 1926-1927, the Government found necessary the annual construction of nine destroyers and six submarines

¹ 169 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1971.

³ Cmd. 2366 of 1925.

² *Ibid.*, col. 2129.

⁴ 187 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 482.

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together with ancillary craft. It left the situation to be reviewed by the next Parliament.¹

The Admiralty's determination to safeguard by all the means in its power the trade routes of the Empire and to assure the greatest efficiency of the Navy was further evidenced in its desire to develop the Singapore Naval Base sufficiently to ensure docking facilities for the largest ships in the British Navy. Great Britain had used Singapore as a naval base since 1882, but the docking facilities of the present base were inadequate. Lord Fisher had strongly recommended the development of the Singapore base before the war. After the war, Lord Jellicoe, in the report to the Dominions on their requirements for naval defence, had also recommended the development of Singapore.² Prior to the meeting of the Imperial Cabinet in 1921, the Admiralty had decided to modernize and extend certain bases in the Pacific, particularly Singapore,³ in view of the fact that the base nearest to India and the Pacific Dominions which could accommodate the largest British ships was Malta, 8,000 miles away, and that, therefore, a naval base in the Pacific was necessary to ensure the mobility of the British Fleet in the Far East in case of necessity. The British Government decided, in June 1921, to develop the naval base at Singapore and this decision was endorsed by the Imperial Cabinet.⁴ At the Washington Conference, when decision was made regarding the stabilization of the *status quo* in naval bases in the Pacific, the Powers were well aware of the plans of the British Admiralty regarding Singapore and the western limit of 110° east longitude was settled upon in order "deliberately and with the full knowledge and concurrence of the other Signatories . . . to exclude Singapore from the *status quo* zone."⁵

¹ 186 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 2421-2422. The programme called for 9 cruisers of 10,000 tons and 7 of 8,000 tons. The total number of ships to be built amounted to 81 at a cost of £58,000,000 (Cmd. 2476 of 1925).

² *Vide supra*, p. 91.

³ 147 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1066.

⁴ 165 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 249.

⁵ James, Commander C. H. N., R.N., "Naval Bases and Fighting Power," *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1925, p. 117. Cf. Statement of Minister of the Navy for Japan, Admiral Takarabe, *The Times*, July 23, 1923. Prime Minister S. M. Bruce of Australia, speaking at a dinner of the London Branch

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The first indication of the British Government's decision to proceed actively with the development of Singapore was given in the "Statement of the First Lord of the Admiralty," dated February 27, 1923. "Owing to the increased draught and size of modern battleships, it is no longer possible to dock the latest ships in Eastern waters. Any extension at Hong Kong is precluded by the terms of the Washington Agreement and it has accordingly been decided to proceed gradually with the development of the naval base at Singapore."¹ For this purpose, £200,000 were included in the Navy Estimates. This decision provoked widespread discussion in England as to the wisdom of the project and its probable influence upon Anglo-Japanese relations. The Labour Party was violent in its disapproval of the scheme. The Pacific Dominions, however, were highly in favour of the proposed development. The Straits Settlements made a gift to the British Government of all the land required for the project and work proceeded at once. The Imperial Conference of 1923 took note of "the deep interest of the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand, and India, in the provision of a Naval Base at Singapore, as essential for ensuring the mobility necessary to provide for the security of the territories and trade of the Empire in Eastern Waters."²

As soon as the First MacDonald Government came into office, Mr. Ammon, Parliamentary Secretary of the Admiralty, during the debates on the Navy Estimates, March 18, 1924, stated that development of the naval base at Singapore involved "questions of much wider implication than that of naval strategy. After full consideration of all the relevant facts and consultation with the Dominions Overseas, the Government have decided not to proceed further with the Singapore scheme."³ The abandonment of this scheme by the Labour Cabinet in the teeth of the opposition of the Australian Natives' Association on January 15, 1924, declared that "Australia understood at the time that the Treaty was signed that Singapore was to be built. Australia would never have agreed to the Treaty if Singapore had been included in the area where the building of bases and docks was prohibited" (*The Times*, January 16, 1924).

¹ Cmd. 1818 of 1923, p. 7.

² Cmd. 1987 of 1923, pp. 16-17.

³ 171 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 288-289.

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sition of the Pacific Dominions because of the detrimental effect its continuance would have exerted on foreign policy was a part of the MacDonald method of diplomacy, of relying more on disarmament than on armaments as an instrument of national policy. This decision regarding Singapore, however, was immediately reversed by the Baldwin Government, whose policy was announced in His Majesty's Speech opening Parliament, December 9, 1924.¹ The Statement of the First Lord of the Admiralty on March 9, 1925, gave the position of the Government more in detail and announced that the Colonial Government of Hong Kong had subscribed £250,000 toward the cost of Singapore.² In 1927, the Government of the Malay States donated £2,000,000 for the same purpose and New Zealand followed suit with £1,000,000 in 1928.³ In September 1928, the contract for the graving dock was signed and work was thus provided for a long period of time. In spite of this, however, the Second Labour Government announced in December 1929 that in view of the forthcoming Five Power Naval Conference at London, all work on the contract would be slowed down and all work that could be suspended would be suspended until after the Conference.⁴

The Geneva Naval Conference of 1927

The Washington Conference was no sooner over than efforts were made to convene another meeting of the naval Powers to effect a limitation of auxiliary vessels. At the end of 1922, the Naval Committee of the House of Representatives requested President Harding to call such a conference.⁵ The request was embodied in the Navy Appropriation Bill which was signed by President Harding on January 22, 1923. This request was renewed in 1924 and President Coolidge stated that, when the European situation would permit, when the Dawes Plan would be in operation, he would call another conference similar to the Washington Con-

¹ 179 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 49.

² 203 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1681.

³ *Ibid.*; 214 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 2138; Cmd. 3052 of 1928.

⁴ 231 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 2012.

⁵ *The Times*, January 24, 1923; 164 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 831.

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ference.¹ Agitation in the United States for a conference continued until the London Conference of 1930. In England the Labour and Liberal Parties were continually stressing in Parliament the necessity for a world conference on disarmament. The Government, however, while in favour of such a conference would not take any independent action which might render nugatory the attempts of the League of Nations to arrive at a workable agreement. During the Coolidge Administration, the naval situation was discussed with the American Ambassador and the whole matter of holding another naval conference came under consideration.² Meanwhile, the Admiralty was studying the outstanding issues among the naval Powers and, after months of work, brought to the notice of the Government the proposals which Mr. Bridgeman was later to make at the opening meeting of the Geneva Naval Conference.³ The Admiralty aimed to make these proposals, which greatly limited both the expense and aggressive power of ships, the basis of a further naval limitation conference provided they were accepted by the Cabinet.⁴ On February 10, 1927, a week after the submission of these proposals of the Cabinet by the Admiralty, President Coolidge issued through the American Ambassadors to Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan his message proposing to the Governments to give full powers to their representatives at the forthcoming meeting of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference to conclude a treaty for naval disarmament in all categories of ships.⁵

Four days after receiving the proposal of Mr. Coolidge, Mr. Baldwin expressed the opinion, in the House of Commons, that the House would be in favour of embracing every opportunity to discuss the matter.⁶ The British Government consulted the Dominions and then accepted President Coolidge's invitation

¹ *The Times*, March 22, April 22, 23, August 15, November 4, 1924.

² 180 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1059-1060.

³ 209 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1534; *vide infra*, pp. 157-158.

⁴ 210 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 2102, 2189; Cmd. 3052 of 1928, p. 5.

⁵ *Sen. Doc.*, No. 55, 70th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 3-6.

⁶ 202 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 552-553.

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in a note to the American Ambassador published on February 28, 1927. After drawing attention to the special geographical position of the British Empire and its particular needs, the British Government stated that it was prepared to "consider to what extent the principles adopted at Washington can be carried further, either as regards the ratio in different classes of ships between the various Powers or in other important ways."¹ On March 9, 1927, Mr. Bridgeman, the First Lord of the Admiralty, announced the postponement of the 1927 naval building programme to later in the financial year (February 1928), when the results of the proposed conference would be known.² He added later, on the 23rd, that this decision had been taken before the invitation to the Conference had been received.³ In the debates on the Navy Estimates, March 14, 1927, Mr. Bridgeman laid down once again the principles of British naval policy by which he intended to be guided at the forthcoming Conference. He said:

"There are special circumstances with regard to our Navy which are totally different from those of any other country. Our obligation is to maintain a Fleet equal in naval strength to that of any other Power, and provide reasonable security for safeguarding trade and communications. That is the sacred duty, as I regard it, placed upon the Fleet, and one which we at the Admiralty are proud to endeavour to carry out."⁴

This policy implied parity with the United States in battle strength and the need for commerce-protecting vessels over and above such battle-fleet parity.

While France and Italy refused Mr. Coolidge's invitation, Japan joined Great Britain in accepting it and the first plenary session of the Conference was held in Geneva on June 20, 1927. After the necessary formalities, Mr. Gibson who had been elected chairman stated the proposals of the United States Government with respect to the limitation of auxiliary craft. The United States had no intention of maintaining a naval force which could be regarded as a threat to any Power. Pursuant to this policy, therefore, Mr. Gibson stated that "the United States is prepared to

¹ 203 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 29-30. ² *Ibid.*, col. 1214.

³ 204 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 369.

⁴ 203 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1683-1684.

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accept a general programme providing for as low a total tonnage in each class of auxiliary vessels, on the basis of the Washington Treaty ratio, as will be acceptable to the other Powers here represented.”¹ The American delegation sought a real limitation to obviate extensive building programmes for the future and the fixing of unduly high tonnages in the various classes would not be calculated to achieve this result. It therefore made the following suggestions: (1) that the ratios and principles of the Washington Treaty be applied to cruisers, destroyers, and submarines; (2) that any agreement reached be co-terminous with the above-mentioned Treaty; (3) that for the purpose of limitation auxiliary vessels be divided into four classes—cruisers, destroyers, and submarines, and a fourth category of vessels of negligible combatant value. These classes were defined so that cruisers included surface vessels between 3,000 and 10,000 tons, destroyers surface combatant vessels between 600 and 3,000 tons with a speed greater than 17 knots, and submarines all vessels designed to operate below the surface of the sea.

Besides these qualitative limitations designating the classes, the American delegation suggested a total tonnage for each class. These proposals were substantially the same as those made by Mr. Hughes at the Washington Conference, namely, in cruisers, 250,000 to 300,000 tons for the United States and Great Britain and 150,000 to 180,000 tons for Japan; in destroyers, 200,000 to 250,000 tons for the United States and Great Britain and 120,000 to 150,000 tons for Japan and in submarines, 60,000 to 90,000 tons for the United States and Great Britain and 36,000 to 54,000 tons for Japan. To avoid wasteful scrapping and simultaneous building the American delegation contemplated an adjustment between the cruiser and destroyer classes which would permit the combination of cruiser-destroyer tonnage for the present but would limit replacement to a maximum tonnage in each class. The age of replacement was put at 20 years for cruisers, 15–17 years for destroyers, and 12–13 years for submarines.²

¹ *Sen. Doc.*, No. 55, 70th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 26.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 24–28, 185–186.

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The American proposals were based upon their contention at the Washington Conference that capital ships are a measurement of the strength of navies and a proportionate allowance of auxiliary craft should be made upon the basis of this measurement. The same thesis held that naval armaments are relative and depend for their size upon the armaments of other countries. At Washington, the British delegation had accepted parity with the United States in battle fleet, but demanded exception to the principles laid down in regard to cruisers for which the geographical position of the British Empire created a particular need not relative to or dependent upon the naval armaments of other Powers. This difference in point of view had not been insisted upon at Washington, and the American delegation at the Geneva Conference made its proposals on the basis of the principles it had laid down at Washington. The American proposals combined quantitative limitation by total tonnage of each category with wide qualitative limitation of each unit. They left room for choice, within broad qualitative limits, of the units to be built in each category. They thus left open an avenue of competition which might lead to uneasiness and suspicion. The Washington Conference had adopted these limitations with regard to capital ships but had, at the same time, limited the number of units to be built within the category. It had, however, limited aircraft carriers in exactly the same way in which the American delegation was now proposing to limit auxiliary vessels. The American proposals contained no qualitative limitation of gunnage but this was later remedied in committee when the American experts agreed to such limitation.

Mr. Bridgeman, without commenting on Mr. Gibson's speech, laid down the British propositions worked out by the Admiralty. These propositions assured the British interest in numbers. They provided for limitation and reduction of total tonnage and expense by a series of qualitative limitations of the maximum tonnage and gunnage of each category of ships, and also for a quantitative limitation of the number of each standardized unit. Unlike the other delegations, the British proposed

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to reopen the settlements of Washington regarding capital ships and aircraft carriers by extending the accepted life of existing capital ships from twenty to twenty-six years, reducing the size of any battleship to be built in the future from 35,000 to something under 30,000 tons and their maximum gunnage from 16-inch to 13·5-inch, and reducing the maximum size of aircraft carriers from 27,000 to 25,000 tons and their maximum gunnage from 8-inch to 6-inch.

Besides these proposals, the British delegation desired to place the life of auxiliary vessels at twenty-four years for 8-inch cruisers, twenty years for destroyers, and fifteen years for submarines. They accepted the 5-5-3 ratio for cruisers of 10,000 tons displacement carrying 8-inch guns, of which the number for each country was to be fixed. All further cruiser construction was to be limited to 7,500 tons with 6-inch guns. The maximum tonnage or destroyer leaders and destroyers was placed at 1,750 and 1,400 respectively, with guns limited at 5-inch. While still in favour of abolishing the submarine, the British delegation proposed division of submarines into two categories, the larger to be limited to 1,600 tons and the smaller to 600 tons, the armament of each category not to be larger than 5-inch guns. These proposals were well adapted to the needs of the British Empire for economy. The proposed limitations of the battleship would save money on replacement, and the limitation of 8-inch cruisers with liberty in 6-inch guns cruisers left full play to British needs for commerce protecting vessels.¹

The Japanese also put forward certain propositions for the limitation of auxiliary craft. They based their computation, as had been done at Washington, on the *status quo* in auxiliary vessels as expressing each country's needs for such vessels. They, therefore, proposed the limitation of each navy to the existing strength in auxiliary craft as computed from the tonnage of completed ships actually possessed by each Power, and the designed tonnage of ships under construction. The designed

¹ *Sen. Doc.*, No. 55, 70th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 28-32, 187-188; 208 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1273-1276.

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tonnage of ships not yet laid down, but embodied in authorized building programmes, and the tonnage of ships due for replacement were also to be considered in determining the naval strength allotted to each Power. Age for replacement of surface auxiliary craft above 3,000 tons was set at sixteen years, and surface auxiliary craft under 3,000 tons, and submarines, at twelve years. Certain ships were excluded from consideration in estimating naval strength: (a) ships not exceeding 700 tons displacement; (b) surface ships carrying guns no larger than 3-inch, or carrying only four such guns but none larger than 6-inch provided that the speed did not exceed 20 knots, and (c) aircraft carriers under 10,000 tons. Appropriate regulations for replacement were to be made as well as adjustment permitting the retention of certain over-aged ships. The Japanese proposals differed little in practical application from the American as the total tonnage of surface auxiliary ships proposed for the British Empire by the Japanese delegation amounted to 472,000 tons—the American delegation had suggested 450,000 to 550,000 tons. The difference between the proposals lay in the age for replacement, the division into classes, and the exempt vessels. The Japanese suggestions, however, had been made so general as to permit of considerable adjustment.¹

On the basis of these different proposals, the Committee of Experts and the Executive Committee discussed the possibility of limiting auxiliary craft. The American and Japanese delegations would discuss the limitations of the capital ship and aircraft carrier proposed by the British delegation only after agreement had been reached on the limitation of auxiliary vessels. Through mutual concessions, the experts were able to agree quickly on the limitation of these ships. They placed the maximum individual tonnage of destroyer leaders at 1,850 tons and destroyers at 1,500 tons, the minimum tonnage at 600 tons, and the maximum calibre of guns at 5-inch. Larger ships were considered to be cruisers. The age limit of destroyers was placed at sixteen years. Sixteen per cent of the total

¹ *Sen. Doc.*, No. 55, 70th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 32-34, 189-192.

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destroyer tonnage could be used for destroyer leaders, while 100 per cent could be used for destroyers. After laying down the method to be used in calculating the surface displacement of submarines, the Committee of Experts agreed to limit the maximum individual surface displacement of submarines at 1,800 tons with a maximum calibre of gun of 5-inch. All submarines were to be limited and could be replaced after thirteen years. The experts also agreed on the naval auxiliary vessels which were to be exempt from application of the limitation provisions¹ but had to admit failure with regard to cruiser limitation. As the American delegation was particularly insistent that agreements already reached on auxiliary craft should be subordinated to the solution of the cruiser problem, the success of the conference hinged upon the possibility of finding a satisfactory way of settling this problem.

In opposition to the American proposal for the limitation of cruisers to a total tonnage which might be distributed in surface ships of any tonnage between the maximum limits fixed at Washington and the minimum limits just agreed upon was the British proposition for the division of cruisers into two classes, those with 8-inch guns and those with 6-inch guns, and the limitation of the numbers within each unit. Within these limits, the British delegation stated Britain's needs to be fifteen cruisers of the larger type and fifty-five of the smaller, provided that small aircraft carriers and minelayers were not included in the cruiser category. In order to meet British requirements, the American delegation agreed to discuss cruiser tonnage up to 400,000 tons. Beyond that it could not go, for such a figure would provide no effective limitation. It was ready, for the length of

¹ Among the exempt vessels were: (1) all naval surface combatant vessels of less than 600 tons; (2) all naval surface combatant vessels of 600 to 2,000 tons provided they have none of the following characteristics: (a) mount a gun greater than 6-inch; (b) mount more than four guns above 3-inch calibre; (c) are designed or fitted to launch torpedoes; (d) are designed for a speed greater than 18 knots; (3) certain types of ships named by mutual agreement or ships not built for fighting services and not so used provided they conform to certain characteristics, *i.e.* have no combatant value (*Sen. Doc.*, No. 55, 70th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 199-200).

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the Convention, to undertake not to build more than twenty-five 10,000-ton cruisers and to limit the remainder to a lower tonnage without, however, limiting the gunnage to any other than the 8-inch limit set down at Washington.¹ These modified propositions did not perceptibly change the situation. The British need for cruisers was based on war-time experience, and British delegates sought to protect their lines of communications as completely as possible. The new tonnage proposed by the American delegation would not allow for the number of cruisers desired by the British Government, particularly in view of the failure to limit 8-inch cruisers. The crux of the question lay in the demand of the United States for complete freedom in the size of guns for cruisers while the British Government wanted strict limitation in order to bring its total tonnage requirements within reasonable figures.

This essential difference was brought out even more clearly in the discussion of a memorandum embodying conversations between the Japanese and British delegations. It was agreed by both delegations to set one total tonnage figure for all classes of surface auxiliary vessels instead of separate figures for the different categories. The Japanese delegate, Admiral Kobayashi, suggested 484,000 tons for Great Britain and the United States, and 315,000 tons for Japan, while Admiral Field suggested 500,000 tons and 325,000 tons. Both Admirals agreed to the retention up to 25 per cent of the total tonnage of over-aged vessels. Cruisers of 10,000 tons were limited in numbers to twelve for Great Britain and the United States, and eight for Japan, and Japan announced her intention of laying down no more 8-inch cruisers until December 31, 1936. The freedom of allocating tonnage to each class was to be limited by the maximum percentage of total tonnage which could be allowed to cruisers and destroyers. Admiral Kobayashi suggested 70,000 tons of submarines for Japan while Admiral Field suggested only 60,000 tons.² Even this compromise, which was a long step away from the strict limitation at first proposed by the British delegation,

¹ *Sen. Doc.*, No. 55, 70th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 161.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 170-171.

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failed to settle the cruiser controversy. Mr. Gibson reserved the right of the United States Government to build 8-inch cruisers, although he stated that it was problematical whether it would do so during the life of the Treaty. In view of British apprehensions with regard to 8-inch cruisers, he suggested the inclusion in the Treaty of a political clause which would permit re-examination of the cruiser provisions in the event that the construction of 8-inch gun vessels became a cause of anxiety to any of the contracting Powers.¹

Apprehensive as to the course of negotiations, the British Government, on July 21st, recalled its delegates to London for conference with the Cabinet. The delegates returned to Geneva and, on July 28th, put forward a new proposal as a result of consultation with their Government. This new proposal embodied all the elements of the Anglo-Japanese memorandum of July 18th with the following amendments: (a) the total tonnage figures were fixed for all auxiliary craft including submarines, instead of merely for surface auxiliary craft; (b) there was complete freedom of transfer between the various classes with the exception that the maximum tonnage to be allotted to submarines was fixed; (c) the original British propositions with regard to the qualitative limitations of cruisers and submarines were renewed.² This plan did not settle the vexed question of the qualitative limitations of small cruisers. Rather than embitter the situation further and prevent all possibility of eventual arrangement, it was thought wise to adjourn the conference and continue conversations in private. A British suggestion for a limited convention on points already agreed upon, although supported by the Japanese, was rejected by the United States delegation, and the conference was adjourned on August 4th in order to allow private negotiations between the United States and Great Britain on the points at issue between them.

The cruiser difficulty was due almost entirely to a difference between the American and British delegations on the principles

¹ *Sen. Doc.*, No. 55, 70th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 174, 178.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 53-60, 177-178.

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of naval strength which, although apparent at Washington, was never settled because the cruiser problem did not come up. The American Government, while understanding that the British position required large numbers of cruisers, estimated that these needs were relative and held that, if the United States accepted a lower tonnage of cruisers, British needs ought likewise to drop. Within total tonnage parity, however, the United States Government was ready to see the British Government build, at the expense of size, a larger number of cruisers than the United States, as its own needs were for large cruisers. The British Government, on the other hand, estimated only the needs of its battle fleet to be relative, and had admitted parity with the United States only in this respect. Its requirements for commerce protecting vessels were over and above those of the battle fleet. The British Government, therefore, desired the same number of large 8-inch cruisers—"Offensive Cruisers"—as the United States, under the One-Power Standard or "offensive power parity," even if it had to agree to the United States having a tonnage of small cruisers equal to its own. The situation of commerce protecting vessels was further complicated for Great Britain by the absence of any limitation of the auxiliary naval armaments of France and Italy. The concentration of the naval building of these countries in torpedo craft had been viewed with uneasiness in Great Britain and had, probably more than any other single factor, contributed to the Admiralty's decision to effect strict replacement of all over-aged auxiliary vessels in order to maintain the efficiency of the British Navy.

British naval defence depended on the possibility of containing or blockading the enemy fleet and, at the same time, protecting British lines of communication, *i.e.* the British Navy must prevent an enemy from exercising command of the seas while it was disputing or establishing that command. Having accepted battle parity with the United States, the British Government required parity in offensive power,¹ in the power which may be used to

¹ The naval policy of the British Government was based on the One-Power Standard interpreted as equality in strength, *i.e.* offensive power, with the navy

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establish command. It was this application of the principle of parity which made the British delegation so insistent in its desire to have the same number of 8-inch cruisers as the United States, while not denying the right of that country to have as many as it deemed necessary for its security. As this principle of battle fleet parity was the one laid down at the Washington Conference and formed the basis of the transactions in battleships and aircraft carriers which took place there, the disagreement at Geneva was really the product of the Washington Conference which had established this somewhat crude and rough system of measurement of respective naval needs in terms of comparison and estimates as the "One-Power Standard" or "battle fleet parity."

The cause of the failure of the Geneva Naval Conference was immediately recognized in Great Britain. Mr. Churchill, speaking at Haslemere two days after the close of the Conference said: "But after all, the fundamental cause which prevented agreement lay in the different views taken of what constitutes naval equality by the Americans and ourselves."¹ Speaking in the House of Commons on March 14, 1929, Mr. Bridgeman attributed the failure of Geneva to the same cause. The conference had failed "because we could not find a formula which would equate ships mounting 8-inch guns with ships mounting 6-inch guns. . . . The reason for the breakdown of the Conference was that although we agree on equality, we could not find a formula for it."² Lord Grey of Fallodon, in a letter to *The Times* dated August 10, 1927, analysed the situation much more deeply, and suggested the solution which eventually solved the problem:

of any other Power plus the cruisers necessary to protect trade routes. Laying down the policy of the Conservative Government in a speech at the Royal Albert Hall on May 2, 1924, Mr. Baldwin stated: "We stand for a One-Power Navy sufficiently equipped with cruisers to protect our trade routes, sufficiently equipped with bases throughout the world to make our Fleet mobile and capable of action wherever the call may come from" (*The Times*, May 3, 1924).

The policy was even more clearly stated by Mr. Bridgeman, First Lord of the Admiralty, at the Constitutional Club on February 4, 1926: "The only hope is to go steadily on keeping up a strength which will enable us to compete with any Power that might attack us, and to afford reasonable protection to the trade upon which we depend for our very lives" (*ibid.*, February 5, 1926).

¹ *Ibid.*, August 8, 1927.

² *Ibid.*, March 15, 1929.

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"The rock on which the Conference was wrecked at Geneva is the theory of 'parity' between the British and American navies; this theory is working badly, and there is every sign that it will cause friction and not harmony between the two countries. . . . 'Parity,' which is designed to avoid competition, does in fact imply rivalry. It means, it is true, that neither country is to have a bigger navy than the other; but it also means that each country must have as large a navy as the other. . . .

"Is it not possible to get back to the axiom on which the British Government tacitly acted before the war—that of not taking account of the American Navy in calculating the requirements of the British Empire. . . . Let me conclude by urging that the better way of approach to the next Armaments Conference will be by way of arbitration and other agreements which rule out between the conferring nations the possibility of war."¹

Mr. MacDonald, the Leader of the Opposition, took a similar attitude in support of his motion of censure on the conduct of the Government at the Geneva Conference:

"The failure that was registered at Geneva I take as one of those things that I should call a natural failure, a failure in the nature of the case, and I say in pursuing security through peace, security through agreement, we will get round that problem, by trying to discover some means by which America and ourselves can come to an agreement, which means that we need not bother about navies with regard to each other at all."²

The British Government fully realized that the way out of the difficulty lay in finding an interpretation of "parity" which would satisfy the particular needs of both the United States and Great Britain without forcing either Power into a programme of naval building unsuited to its needs. Sir Austen Chamberlain voiced the feeling of the Government in this matter at the dinner of the Birmingham Jewellers' and Silversmiths' Association on January 27, 1929:

"But we admitted [parity] freely and willingly as between ourselves and the United States, and such differences as have occurred have not therefore been differences in principle, but merely differences arising

¹ *The Times*, August 11, 1927.

² 210 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 2095.

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out of the difficulties of applying that principle to the very different circumstances and needs of our two countries. . . .

"The problem is to find some equation by which we can measure naval strength so that that parity which both nations desire may be reached, and reached at a level which indicates not an increase in the armaments of the world but a reduction."¹

Negotiations Leading up to the London Naval Conference

At the Geneva Naval Conference, the British delegation had offered to stop building 8-inch cruisers until the United States should have caught up with British building. In spite of the failure to reach an agreement on cruisers, Mr. Bridgeman announced to the House of Commons on November 16, 1927, that the cruiser building programme which had been postponed until after the Conference would not be undertaken. He said that in the light of the present situation "it is not necessary or desirable to proceed with the laying down of the other two ships this year."² Later, on the 23rd, he further announced that in view of the fact that there were already eleven 10,000-ton cruisers building for the navy, the Admiralty might substitute a small cruiser for the 10,000-ton one planned for 1928.³ Meanwhile, in the United States, the Secretary of the Navy introduced a Bill in Congress calling for the building of twenty-five light cruisers of 10,000 tons, nine destroyer leaders, fifty-two submarines, and five aircraft carriers at the cost of £145,000,000. Public opinion in the United States, however, showed itself in opposition to this huge programme, the largest since 1916.

The British Government refused to be alarmed, and considered that the American Government had full right to build as it pleased to fulfil its needs. It announced, in an official statement given to the Press on January 21, 1928, its decision to cancel one of the cruisers for 1928.⁴ This conciliatory attitude served to strengthen American public opinion against the Twenty-Five

¹ *The Times*, January 28, 1929.

² 210 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1013. The two ships were of 10,000 and 8,000 tons respectively.

³ 213 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 845.

⁴ *Ibid.*

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Cruiser Bill and, in February 1928, the Chairman of the House Naval Committee announced that it would be withdrawn. In its place, a new Bill was introduced calling for the construction of fifteen cruisers and one aircraft carrier. When this new Bill passed the House of Representatives on March 18, 1928, it contained a clause asking the President to encourage further conference for limitation of armaments. During this time, on February 4, 1928, Secretary of State Kellogg informed the United States Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives that the United States would be willing to sign a treaty with all the nations of the world prohibiting altogether the use of submarines.¹

While the Cruiser Bill was under consideration in the United States, the British Government could not make any proposals for the further limitation of armaments for fear such a move might be interpreted as an attempt to interfere with the passing of the Bill. There was great pressure in England, however, for the conclusion of an arbitration treaty with the United States on the basis of which the problem of naval limitation could be more successfully dealt with. The initiative of the United States in extending the peace pact of Mr. Briand to include all nations of the world was, therefore, very welcome. The British Government accepted Mr. Kellogg's proposal to "outlaw war as an instrument of national policy" and never to settle international disputes "except by pacific means," and the Pact of Paris was signed on August 27, 1928. This pact of peace was the greatest step taken since the war toward the reduction and limitation of armaments "to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations." If enforced in diplomacy, it meant that war, or the use of armaments, was no longer to be tolerated as the continuation of national policy. The Kellogg-Briand Pact thus restricted the use of armaments exclusively to police purposes and thereby took away from them their power of influencing diplomatic interchanges. The practical effect of the Pact was to place upon the use of armaments a disability which, if the Pact were made

¹ *The Times*, February 6, 1927; 213 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 256-257.

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an effective instrument of international relations, would offset the diplomatic advantages derived from war or the threat of war. If signed in good faith by the United States and Great Britain, therefore, it took away all meaning from the principle of "offensive power parity" or "battle fleet parity" and opened the way for a solution of the naval problem.

The Peace Pact of Paris had hardly been signed when the good relations established between the United States and Great Britain were troubled by the premature disclosure of the Anglo-French Compromise and the distortion of its provisions in the press. One of the points on which there had been complete disagreement at the third session of the Preparatory Commission and which had to be settled before further work could be undertaken by this Commission was the limitation of naval material. At the close of the third session, Jonkheer Loudon, the Chairman of the Preparatory Commission, had strongly recommended private negotiations between the delegations whose points of view were most divergent in order that they might reach some agreement.¹ It was hoped, at that time, that the Geneva Naval Conference would settle the problem of the method of limiting naval material. As there was no agreement reached at this conference, M. Loudon, at the opening meeting of the fourth session of the Preparatory Commission on November 30, 1927, again emphasized the necessity of the harmonization of divergent views by diplomatic preparation.² Before the fifth session of the Preparatory Commission on March 9, 1928, Sir Austen Chamberlain approached M. Briand with the idea of discussing points at issue between them. He placed before him the latest proposals of the British Admiralty with regard to naval limitation and intimated that the British Government would be ready to abandon its attitude on the limitation of trained reserves in exchange for a similar concession from France in naval matters. M. Briand asked for a copy of the British proposals to lay before French naval authorities.³

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series IV, pp. 353-354. ² *Ibid.*, Series V, p. 7. ³ Cmd. 3211 of 1928, p. 17.

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The first intimation that this conversation had borne fruit was given by Count Clauzel, the French Representative in the Preparatory Commission, at the fifth session on March 22, 1928. He stated that the technical experts had been holding conversations which he hoped would result in ultimate agreement. Lord Cushendun confirmed the statement on the next day.¹ As a result of these conversations, Vice-Admiral Violette, at Geneva early in June, made a personal suggestion to Admiral Kelly—which the British Government mistakenly assumed to have the approval of the French Government—that the only surface vessels subject to limitation should be those mounting a gun greater than 6-inch in calibre. This would meet British needs for a large number of small cruisers and leave the French free to build what torpedo craft they desired. Sir Austen Chamberlain instructed Lord Crewe, British Ambassador at Paris, on June 26, 1928, to inform the French Foreign Secretary that the British Government would be willing to accept Vice-Admiral Violette's proposal and would consider it as a French concession to its views, in exchange for which it would withdraw its opposition to the French stand on army-trained reserves.²

The French Government replied in a note dated July 20, 1928. After expressing regret that the British Government could not accept the French Compromise proposals of March 1927, the French Government considered that any basis for discussion arrived at between them should be submitted to the other naval Powers for consideration. The French note went on to resume recent conversations between the Chief of Staff of the French Navy and Admiral Kelly. Vice-Admiral Violette had recalled the proposals of Admiral Field, made to Admiral Kobayashi at the Geneva Naval Conference, that the three Powers have an equal maximum tonnage of submarines.³ He had asked whether this

¹ Cmd. 3211 of 1928, pp. 18–20.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 20–22.

³ Although this was reported in the text of the Anglo-Japanese memorandum of July 18th, Admiral Field stated that the proposal had been that, if the Japanese Government agreed to a lower submarine tonnage, the other Powers would adjust their demands to this lower tonnage (*Sen. Doc.*, No. 55, 70th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 171).

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might not be done with regard to submarines and cruisers with guns larger than 6-inch in calibre. Vice-Admiral Violette had also inquired whether submarines could not be divided into two classes, as the British Admiralty had often suggested, with the smaller class of submarines unlimited, as proposed by the Japanese delegation in the opening meeting of the Geneva Conference. At the Disarmament Conference, each Power would state the maximum tonnage it intended to build during the length of the convention in the classes of ships not limited. The proposals contained in this note were accepted by the British Government on July 28, 1928,¹ and were communicated to Washington, Rome, and Tokyo in the form of an Anglo-French Compromise to act as basis for the draft Convention which the Preparatory Commission was to submit to the Council.

The Anglo-French Compromise as finally drawn up in the note of Lord Crewe to M. Briand of July 28, 1928, read as follows:

"Limitations which the Disarmament Conference will have to determine will deal with four classes of warships:

- "(1) Capital ships, *i.e.* ships of over 10,000 tons or with guns more than 8-inch calibre.
- "(2) Aircraft Carriers of over 10,000 tons.
- "(3) Surface vessels of or below 10,000 tons armed with guns of more than 6-inch and up to 8-inch calibre.
- "(4) Ocean-going submarines, *i.e.* over 600 tons.

"The Washington Treaty regulates limitations in classes (1) and (2), and the Disarmament Conference will only have to consider the method of extending these limitations to Powers non-signatory to this Treaty.

"As regards classes (3) and (4), the final Disarmament Conference will fix a maximum tonnage applicable to all Powers which no Power will be allowed to exceed for the total of vessels in each of these respective categories during the period covered by the convention. Within this maximum limit each Power will at the final conference indicate for each of these categories the tonnage they propose to reach and which they undertake not to exceed during the period covered by the convention."²

The Compromise was rejected by both the United States and

¹ Cmd. 3211 of 1928, pp. 22-27.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

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Italy, and public opinion in Germany and Great Britain was highly incensed over it. In a note from Mr. Houghton, American Ambassador to Great Britain, to Lord Cushendun on September 28, 1928, the American Government offered its criticisms of the Anglo-French Compromise. This Compromise proposed effective limitation only of large 10,000-ton or 8-inch cruisers which were particularly suited to American needs and of submarines over 600 tons. This left unlimited important combatant vessels and renewed in an "even more objectionable form" the British proposals at the Geneva Conference which the United States Government had found unacceptable. In order to stop building competition between nations, all classes of combatant vessels must be limited, submarines as well as surface vessels. The Anglo-French Compromise imposed restrictions "only on types peculiarly suitable to American needs." After reviewing the propositions for the limitation of naval armaments put forth by the American Government since the Washington Conference, the note continued with the statement that, while the United States could not accept the Compromise as a basis for limitation of her own armaments, she remained ready to discuss the means of adjusting the naval needs of other Powers through a provision for transfer of tonnage from one class to the other. The United States Government would be ready to consider such a proposal from the British Government and discuss it with British representatives.¹ The Government of Italy replied to the British note in a *note verbale* communicated to His Majesty's representative at Rome on October 6, 1928. It renewed the stand for global tonnage limitation it had adopted in Sub-Commission A and the Preparatory Commission and suggested a battleship replacement holiday until 1936.² The Japanese Government, on the other hand, accepted the Anglo-French Compromise as basis for discussion,³ but the refusal of the United States and Italy to consider it as such deprived it of its utility.

In the Third Commission of the Ninth Assembly of the League

¹ Cmd. 3211 of 1928, pp. 34-38.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 39-43.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

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of Nations, M. Loudon on September 8, 1928, suggested that representatives of the five large naval Powers, namely Great Britain, the United States, Japan, France, and Italy, should meet with him in London to discuss the possibility of finding a way out of present difficulties regarding naval armaments so as to permit resumption of the work of the Preparatory Commission.¹ Lord Cushendun felt that this would be anticipating the 1931 Conference provided for in the Washington Naval Agreement of 1922. He felt that it was better to go slowly.² Nothing came of the suggestion. On December 3, 1928, Mr. Baldwin announced in the House of Commons that, in reply to a speech in which he had deplored lack of contact between Governments, he had received a telegram from Mr. Britten, Chairman of the Naval Committee of the House of Representatives, proposing an inter-parliamentary conference between English and American legislators to be held in Canada after March 4, 1929, to discuss the question of naval armaments. In his reply Mr. Baldwin stated that while he agreed with the spirit which prompted the telegram he could say nothing about the proposal as it would be discourteous to the United States Government, which had not approved of the proposal before it was telegraphed.³

On February 6, 1929, the day after the Cruiser Bill was passed in the United States Senate, Sir Austen Chamberlain informed the House of Commons that the Government was engaged in a careful examination of "all questions concerning our relations with America and the naval conditions of the two countries."⁴ On February 13, 1929, President Coolidge signed the Fifteen Cruiser Bill, and on the 15th Sir Esmé Howard, British Ambassador at Washington, intimated that Great Britain, since the Cruiser Bill was now out of the way, would soon make another effort to promote an agreement on the limitation of naval armaments.⁵ On the following day the British Foreign Office denied that there had been a change of position since Sir Austen Cham-

¹ *Records of the Ninth Assembly*, Minutes of the Third Committee, p. 58.

² *The Times*, September 19, 1928.

³ 223 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 828-829.

⁴ 224 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1741.

⁵ *The Times*, February 16, 1929.

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berlain's statement.¹ On March 14, 1929, during the debates on the Navy Estimates, the First Lord of the Admiralty stated that two of three cruisers provided for would be comparatively small vessels armed with 6-inch guns instead of the 8-inch gun cruisers laid down in the Birkenhead programme of 1925. At this rate of replacement, of three cruisers a year, the British Navy would have only fifty cruisers under sixteen years old in 1940 as compared with fifty-two in the current year and one hundred and fourteen in 1914.²

Shortly after his inauguration as President of the United States, on April 10, 1929, Mr. Hoover appointed General Dawes Ambassador to Great Britain with the special mission of preparing the ground for agreement on limitation of naval armaments. A few days later, on April 22nd, Mr. Hugh Gibson, American delegate at the sixth session of the Preparatory Commission, made a speech in this Commission in which he intimated that while the American Government was still convinced that the "simplest, fairest, and most practical method" of limiting naval armaments was by tonnage by categories, it was ready, in order to facilitate general agreement, to accept the French Transactional Proposal of April 11, 1927,³ and to consider any "method of estimating equivalent naval values which takes account of other factors than displacement tonnage alone. In order to arrive at a basis of comparison in the case of categories in which there are marked variations as to unit characteristics, it might be desirable, in arriving at a formula for estimating equivalent tonnage, to consider certain factors which produce these variations, such as age, unit displacement and calibre of gun."

After thus holding out hope of finding a technical "yardstick,"⁴

¹ *The Times*, February 17, 1929.

² 226 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1310.

³ *Vide supra*, p. 140.

⁴ The possibility of finding a "yardstick" was referred to by Mr. Hoover in his Memorial Day Address of May 30, 1929: "But to arrive at any agreement through which we can, marching in company with our brother nations, secure a reduction of armaments but at the same time maintain a just preparedness for the protection of our peoples we must find a rational yardstick with which to make reasonable comparisons of their naval units and ours and thus maintain an agreed relativity" (*The Times*, May 31, 1929).

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Mr. Gibson explained the spirit in which it should be used:

"My Government has always felt that we need no exact balance of ships and guns which can be based only upon the idea of conflict—what is really wanted is a common-sense agreement, based upon the idea that we are going to be friends and settle our problems by peaceful means. . . . It feels that genuine disarmament will follow only from a change of attitude toward the use of force in the settlement of international disputes."¹

Lord Cushendun echoed Mr. Gibson's desire to reach limitation of armaments along the lines set down by the American Government and agreed with him that a solution of the naval problem might be found in a system of equivalent values, which the British experts had also been considering independently.² Mr. Baldwin endorsed Mr. Gibson's speech in the House of Commons on April 25, 1929.³ The declaration of policy of the American Government was so pregnant with possibilities that the Preparatory Commission adjourned the first part of its sixth session in order to enable the naval Powers to discuss it among themselves.⁴

As a result of the General Election in England, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald formed a Labour Government on June 7, 1929. On June 14th General Dawes arrived in England and on the 16th was conferring with Prime Minister MacDonald at Forres on the subject of naval disarmament.⁵ In a speech at the Pilgrims Dinner on June 18th, General Dawes again talked of the possibility of finding a "yardstick" to measure American and British needs so as to ensure substantial equality.⁶ Both he and Mr. MacDonald, who spoke at Lossiemouth on the same day, stressed the fact that any agreement would be submitted to the other Powers for consideration. According to an article in *The Times* of June 20, 1929, the "yardstick" under consideration was a

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series VIII, pp. 56-58.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

³ *The Times*, April 26, 1929.

⁴ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series VIII, pp. 187-190.

⁵ *The Times*, June 17, 1929.

⁶ *Ibid.*, June 19, 1929.

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cruiser tonnage allowance of 350,000 tons for Great Britain and 300,000 tons for the United States with one 8-inch cruiser being considered worth two 6-inch cruisers. On June 25th Mr. MacDonald stated that he had held a second interview with General Dawes and that he was "decidedly hopeful" as to the results.¹ The outcome of these interviews was the inclusion of the following passage in the King's Speech opening the First Session of the Thirty-Fifth Parliament on July 2, 1929:

"Conversations have commenced with the Ambassador of the United States of America on the subject of naval disarmament, in consequence of which it is the earnest hope of my Government to ensure in co-operation with my Governments in the Dominions, the Government of India and the Governments of foreign Powers, an early reduction of armaments throughout the world."²

In a statement on naval policy and disarmament in the House of Commons on July 24, 1929, Mr. MacDonald said that it was the controlling purpose of the Government to make the Peace Pact an effective influence in international relations³ and to carry out this purpose through a systematic policy. With this in mind, he had conferred with Ambassador Dawes and had come to the following conclusions:

"We have agreed upon the principle of parity; we have agreed that, without in any way departing from the conditions of parity, a measure of elasticity can be allowed so as to meet the peace requirements of the two nations. We have determined that we shall not allow technical points to override the great public issues involved in our being able to come to a settlement."

He further envisaged the possibility of going to the United States in October for conversations on Anglo-American relations. The Government had decided after an investigation of the naval position "to suspend all work on the cruisers *Surrey* and *Northumberland*, to cancel the submarine depot ship *Maidstone*, to cancel

¹ *The Times*, June 26, 1929.

² 229 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 47.

³ In the debates on the King's Speech on July 2, 1929, Mr. MacDonald had made it clear that "the Government are anxious to build upon [the Kellogg Pact] a disarmament policy which will recognize that Pact as a living and controlling influence upon international policy" (*ibid.*, col. 66).

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two contract submarines,” and “to slow down dockyard work on the other naval construction.” The Government would not commit itself until the fall on the 1929-1930 programme.¹ When President Hoover heard of this suspension of the British naval building programme, he announced, on the same day, that he would not lay down the keels of the three cruisers due to be laid down in the fall until further consideration. The principle of parity meant that Great Britain and the United States were “not to compete in armaments as potential opponents, but to co-operate as friends in their reduction.”²

Negotiations continued between the British and American Governments, negotiations the progress of which was marked in a series of semi-official *communiqués* from Washington appearing in *The Times*. On September 6th, it was stated that Great Britain had agreed to the United States having more 10,000-ton cruisers while the United States agreed to Great Britain having a larger total tonnage in cruisers. The British proposed fifty cruisers for themselves, of which fifteen would mount guns of 8-inch calibre, while the United States should have eighteen 10,000-ton cruisers. The General Board of the United States Navy was reconciled to Great Britain having 50,000 tons of cruisers more than the United States.³ To this the United States objected that eighteen 8-inch cruisers were not sufficient in view of the British demand for fifteen 8-inch cruisers while they still had four of the *Hawkins* (Improved *Birmingham*) Class.⁴ This difficulty was reduced to the question of whether the United States should demand three more 10,000-ton cruisers with guns 8-inch in calibre or whether she should build five 6-inch gun cruisers. At this point Secretary of State Stimson announced that the United States was ready for the conference as the remaining differences could be easily ironed out.⁵

¹ 230 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1304-1307.

² *The Times*, July 25, 1929.

³ *Ibid.*, September 7, 1929.

⁴ *Ibid.*, September 13, 1929. The Improved *Birmingham* Class (*Effingham*, *Frobisher*, *Hawkins*, and *Vindictive*) are of approximately 9,850 tons with 7·5-inch guns and were laid down at the end of the war.

⁵ *Ibid.*, September 14, 1929.

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On September 15th agreement was reached on a total destroyer tonnage of 125,000 to 150,000 tons. Submarines and battleships were to be reduced by non-replacement of over-aged vessels. British cruiser strength was fixed at 340,000 tons and American at 295,000 to 315,000 tons with either eighteen or twenty-one 8-inch gun cruisers, this point to be determined at the conference when the Japanese attitude on this programme would be known.¹ Mr. MacDonald left for the United States on September 30th and arrived in New York on October 4th. He conferred with President Hoover from October 5th to 7th, on the latter day, the British Foreign Office issued an invitation to the American, French, Italian, and Japanese Governments, through their Ambassadors in Great Britain, to attend a conference at London at the beginning of the third week of January 1930 "to consider the categories not covered by the Washington Treaty and to arrange for and deal with the questions covered by the second paragraph of Article 21 of that Treaty."

The London Naval Conference of 1930

The Anglo-American negotiations which made possible the British invitation to a conference at London were entered into as a direct result of the Geneva Naval Conference to interpret the principle of parity so as to maintain relative equilibrium in a system of limitation which would safeguard essential national needs. The Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact served as the basis of the negotiations. Under the political conditions established by the Pact, the British Admiralty was willing to accept a cruiser tonnage which stabilized the number of cruisers it possessed at the time, namely about fifty, and to give up for a strictly limited time the seventy cruisers it had demanded at the Geneva Conference, provided other nations met this standard and a fair proportion was maintained between large and small cruisers.² The American Government was willing, under existing conditions, that Great Britain should

¹ *The Times*, September 16, 1929.

² 238 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 2091, 2196.

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have a larger cruiser tonnage than it had so long as the United States might have more 8-inch cruisers. This deviation from a strict interpretation of parity was made possible only by the deliberate policy of both Governments of renouncing the idea of using their fleets *vis-à-vis* each other to support their national policy.

As the British invitation to the Conference stated, Great Britain and the United States were in accord on most of the points at issue. They already agreed

“ . . . to adopt the principle of parity in each of the several categories and that such parity shall be reached by December 31, 1936. . . .

“3. The question of battleship strength was also touched upon during the conversations and it has been agreed in these conversations that, subject to the assent of other signatory powers, it would be desirable to reconsider the battleship replacement programmes provided for in the Washington Treaty of 1922 with the view of diminishing the amount of replacement construction implied under that treaty.

“4. Since both the Government of the United States and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom adhere to the attitude that they have publicly adopted in regard to the desirability of securing the total abolition of the submarine, this matter hardly gave rise to discussion during the recent conversations.”¹

The two Governments were also in accord as to the manner in which parity in each category was to be reached. It remained only to adapt the agreement to include Japan before it was cast in final form. The United States delegates came to the London Conference with no other programme, except that of realizing equality in naval power with Great Britain on the basis already agreed upon. The British Government, on the other hand, prepared a memorandum embodying its policy and the agreements already reached with the United States.

This memorandum, dated February 7, 1930, defined the object of British policy: “to keep the highway of the seas open for trade and communication, and, in relation to the political state of the world, to take what steps are necessary to secure this.” By co-operating with international institutions, the British Government

¹ *Proceedings of the London Naval Conference of 1930*, p. 4.

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hoped to eliminate the causes of war, and bring about peace and disarmament. During the transition period, however, armaments were still necessary, but it was the policy of the Government to reduce this necessity by increasing security through disarmament treaties.

"4. In estimating what fleet is required, the Government has also to take account of the obligations which the country has undertaken in consequence of the terms of the Covenant of the League of Nations (partly offset, though they are, by the pooled security afforded under the Covenant by its provision of mutual support) and other commitments which it has inherited and which it has to fulfil in relation to the present condition of the world. In deciding what these amount to in terms of naval strength, the Government must estimate the chances of war breaking out, because, if this is not done, fleets will be built which will never be of any use, but which will threaten rather than protect and at best will be a waste of national resources.

"5. The Government takes the view that, if the strengths of national fleets are not to be a menace, they must be the subject of international agreements, the purpose of which should be to maintain an equilibrium."¹

These agreements had to be of short duration and come under review periodically. The Government, therefore, proposed that the Treaty should run until 1936 and be reviewed at a conference in 1935.

With the above considerations in mind, the British Government proposed an agreement upon global tonnage and upon the total tonnage of each category (capital ships, aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers, and submarines) as well as the maximum individual displacement tonnage of each ship. It further envisaged the possibility of fixing a definite amount of tonnage to be transferable from one category to the other, with the exception of capital ships, aircraft carriers, and submarines. Transfer from the 8-inch gun cruiser to the 6-inch class would be permitted on the basis of a pre-arranged evaluating factor. A facility of transfer of tonnage between small cruisers and destroyers would be extended to those countries where strict distinction between the two categories would be impracticable. Regarding capital ships,

¹ *Proceedings of the London Naval Conference of 1930*, pp. 234-235.

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the British Government advocated that the ratio of capital ships among the Powers be reached eighteen months after the signature of the Treaty instead of in 1936. It proposed a capital ship building holiday until 1935, and a study of the question of reduction of the number, size, and gun calibre of these ships. It stated that the British Admiralty would favour a reduction in size from 35,000 tons to 25,000 tons and of guns from 16-inch to 12-inch, together with a lengthening of age from twenty to twenty-six years. The British Government itself would wish to see an agreement by which the battleship would eventually disappear altogether.

The British Government further proposed the limitation of aircraft carriers to include ships under 10,000 tons, the decrease of the total tonnage allowed at Washington from 125,000 tons to 100,000 tons, the decrease of the maximum size to 25,000 tons and the increase of the age from twenty to twenty-six years. During the conversations with the American Government, the requirements of the British Empire had been put at fifty cruisers with a total tonnage of 339,000 tons. As a final arrangement depended upon the limitations adopted for the size of each unit, the British Government advocated keeping existing limits for 8-inch cruisers and setting the individual maximum displacement of small cruisers at 6,000 or 7,000 tons with a life of twenty years. It advocated the limitation of size of destroyer leaders to 1,850 tons and destroyers to 1,500 tons both to be armed with guns no larger than 5-inch. The present British programme called for 200,000 tons of destroyers but this could be reduced if the submarine programmes of other Powers were correspondingly cut. Finally, the British Government proposed the abolition of submarines or, failing this, their rigid limitation to definite requirements in numbers and size and the revival of the agreement signed at Washington to regulate attack of merchant ships by submarines. With regard to ancillary vessels, specification and yearly publication of individual tonnages in commission or building would suffice.¹

¹ *Proceedings of the London Naval Conference of 1930*, pp. 234-238; Cmd. 3485 of 1930.

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These suggestions showed that although the numerical requirements of the British Navy had been revised downward to reach agreement with the United States on the basis of the Kellogg Pact, the actual policy of Great Britain with regard to the method of limiting armaments remained the same. The British Government still desired, as it had done in Geneva in 1927, reduction of total tonnage and cost through qualitative reductions in the maximum size of each ship and increase of the age limit of serviceability rather than through quantitative reductions. In this way, the British Government could retain the large number of ships it deemed necessary to protect its lines of communication and, at the same time, decrease the huge expense involved. American interest, however, lay in large ships to operate far from their base. This difference in national needs did not arise sharply at London because it had already been agreed that the United States should have more large cruisers than Great Britain while Great Britain was to have more small ones. The difference remained, however, and came to the fore in the naval discussions of the World Disarmament Conference.

Japan came into the London Naval Conference on the basis of the political transactions of Washington. It had been an essential part of the balance of power in the Pacific established at the Washington Conference to leave each Power—Great Britain, the United States, and Japan—dominant within its own sphere of influence. This part of the diplomatic bargain had only been partly carried out; there remained in each fleet important combatant units to be limited and building competition still existed. The Japanese Government was willing to finish the work started at Washington, but it renewed its demand for a 10-10-7 ratio which it abandoned in the general arrangement for a balance of power in the Pacific. Since then, at the Geneva Naval Conference, the British Government had accepted a slight modification of the 5-5-3 ratio by allowing Japan eight large cruisers to her twelve. At the same conference the Anglo-Japanese Memorandum of July 18, 1927, reported Admiral Field as having agreed to parity with Japan in submarines. This was bound to influence the

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Japanese to demand parity with Great Britain and the United States in submarine tonnage.

Mr. Wakatsuki, head of the Japanese delegation at the London Conference, declared the policy of Japan in a Press interview of January 3, 1930. The Japanese Government favoured reduction in size of capital ships and would consider prolongation of the age limit.¹ It was in accord with the proposition to postpone replacement of these ships. It was not in favour of the abolition of submarines, but desired to retain its existing tonnage. It claimed 70 per cent of the largest tonnage in large cruisers, being satisfied with twelve, although it would come down.²

The French Government accepted the invitation to the London Conference, happy to participate in a conference the task of which was to facilitate the work of the Preparatory Commission. In the preliminary exchanges of view, however, it became clear that there was as yet no basis on which an agreement could be reached with France as a party. In its memorandum of December 20, 1929, the French Government rejected the Kellogg Pact as the basis of the work in favour of Article 8 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. It rejected the basis of the Washington Treaty and advocated a system not founded on ratios. It was interested in a system of naval limitation which could be made a part of the general limitation of armaments being drafted by the Preparatory Commission. It was, therefore, ready to accept the propositions contained in the French Transactional Proposal of April 1927. This acceptance was subordinated to the arrangements reached on land and air armaments.

“The French Government does not wish to find itself compelled to raise in London any questions relating to the limitation of land and air armaments, but it cannot conceal the fact that the tonnage required to meet the needs of its naval defence is closely related to its needs in land and air armaments, computed in accordance with the methods laid down by the Preparatory Commission at its last meeting.”

¹ To 25,000 tons with 14-inch guns, with a life of twenty-five years.

² *The Times*, January 4, 1930. They had twelve 8-inch gun cruisers at the opening of the Conference.

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Subject to these conditions, the French Government was ready to make known the tonnage corresponding to its national needs.¹

Italy accepted the British invitation unreservedly. The Italian Government recalled its policy expressed in its *note verbale* of October 6, 1928, in which it stated once again that it would accept any figures, however low, provided they were not exceeded by any other European Power. It supported global tonnage limitation and stressed the interdependence of all armaments. Later, the Italian Government stated that it would not be opposed to the abolition of the submarine if this would lead to substantial reduction of armaments. The French Government opposed the Italian claim to parity with France, as it had done since the Washington Conference had laid down such parity in capital ships and aircraft carriers. France was willing to accept parity in the Mediterranean, however, and suggested, in a note to the Italian Government on December 20, 1919, that an examination be made of the possibility of concluding a mutual guarantee and non-aggression pact among the Mediterranean Naval Powers similar to the Washington Four-Power Pact. The Italian Government expressed its willingness to examine such a pact but reiterated its demand for recognition by the French Government of its claim to parity with France. The French Government included the suggestion for a Mediterranean Pact in its memorandum to the British Government.

The London Naval Conference was in session from January 21 to April 22, 1930. At the outset, on January 23rd, the Italian Government restated its position. "Italy favours the reduction of armaments, even to the lowest possible level, and therefore the Italian Delegation is willing to leave it to other Powers to determine the size of their armaments, reserving to itself the right to regulate its own requirements by theirs."² The Italian delegation sought to open discussion on the determination of ratios and maximum strength but the conference decided otherwise. It therefore stated that

¹ *The Times*, December 27, 1929.

² *Proceedings of the London Naval Conference*, p. 55.

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"... while the Italian Delegation is prepared to take part in the discussions of the above points, it does not see its way of committing itself on any of the questions of method or on any special point of the disarmament problem, until the two fundamental questions of the determination of ratios and maximum levels of global tonnages have been settled."¹

In opposition to this attitude the French delegation stated its naval needs to be absolute needs which, however, could be transformed into relative needs as a result of international agreements.² Its absolute needs it placed so high (800,000 tons as provided in the *Statut Naval* of 1924) that the British Government felt it could not accept the tonnage proposed and limit its naval armaments at the figures agreed upon with the American Government. If the Italian Government reserved its right to build as large a navy as that of France, Great Britain would no longer hold the supremacy of her own waters, the Mediterranean and the route to India, without increasing sensibly her naval forces. Although the British Government had adopted the One-Power Standard to mean parity with the United States, it had never abandoned the Two-Power Standard in Europe and, particularly, in the Mediterranean. A large French Fleet and a correspondingly large Italian Fleet would threaten Britain's predominance in the Mediterranean, a contingency which the British Government wanted to avoid at all cost. The French Government made security guarantees the price of decreasing its demands for naval armaments. Unless these were given and a general agreement reached on military and air armaments as well no definite limitations could be placed on French or Italian armaments.

The European problem of the British Navy which had prevented the limitation of auxiliary craft at Washington, thus making necessary the London Conference, remained unsolved. Nevertheless, after certain understandings with the French on their naval programme until 1936 and with the hope of persuading the French and Italian Governments to arrive at an amicable settlement which would safeguard British supremacy in the

¹ *Proceedings of the London Naval Conference*, p. 65.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 49-52.

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Mediterranean, the British Government entered upon an agreement with the United States and Japan for the limitation of their naval armaments. It did this under the express reservation, contained in Article 21 of the Treaty, that, should the new construction of any Power not party to Part III of the Treaty become threatening to its security, it would be entitled to increase its tonnage correspondingly after notification of reasons for the increase and specifications thereof to the other parties. Of course Japan and the United States could then make similar increases.

This formula had been suggested by Mr. Gibson at the Geneva Naval Conference to allay the apprehensions of Great Britain regarding American building of 8-inch cruisers. It was now incorporated in the London Naval Treaty to permit the British Government to agree to a maximum tonnage of auxiliary craft in the face of the large French submarine tonnage, the project for the building of which had caused it, at the Washington Conference, to refuse any limitation of auxiliary craft. The advent of a Labour Government, the signature of the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact and the changed conditions in Europe with a stronger League of Nations, the development in arbitration and judicial settlement of disputes, the Locarno Treaties, and the creation of another bloc of States in opposition to French hegemony proved sufficiently strong elements to influence the British Government to do in 1930 in the face of 97,875 tons of real submarines what it had refused to do in 1922 in the face of 90,000 tons of potential submarines. This was, of course, subject to the "escalator" possibilities of Article 21 and the cherished hope that further negotiations would bring France and Italy within the provisions of Part III of the London Naval Treaty.

One of the first problems to be dealt with by the conference was the method to be applied in limiting naval armaments. The British Government favoured the limitation of total tonnage, plus tonnage by categories and the maximum individual displacement of each unit. It was ready, however, to allow transfer from one category to another for large and small cruisers and destroyers.

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This method of limitation by categories had been applied at Versailles to the disarmament of Germany, and had been resorted to at Washington in 1921-1922. The British Government had advocated it in Sub-Commission A and in the Preparatory Commission and it had the support of the United States and Japan. Opposed to this method of limitation was the French conception of limitation by global tonnage only. In its compromise proposal of April 1927, the French Government suggested that at the time of laying down the global tonnage limitation each delegation should submit its future naval building programme, which could not be modified except after one year after notification to the Secretary-General of intended modifications. The method of global tonnage limitation had the support of the Italian Government. At the sixth session of the Preparatory Commission the American delegation announced its readiness to accept the French Compromise Proposal as basis of discussion. The British and French Governments had come to agreement in 1928 on a method of limitation of tonnage by categories, but this left unlimited important categories—surface vessels with guns of or smaller than 6-inch and submarines under 600 tons. This proposal had proved unacceptable to the United States and Italy.

The London Conference considered this problem at its third meeting on January 30, 1930. It was placed in the hands of the First Committee which would "examine carefully the possibilities and probable effect of said methods with reference to the fleets of said respective nations." The French delegation submitted a modified compromise proposal in which navies were limited by global tonnage. Each High Contracting Party, however, showed in a table the way in which it intended "to distribute, during the period of application of the convention the total (global) tonnage which it has limited to figures indicated." This distribution among the various classes could be altered only within certain limits laid down in the Treaty and after notification to the other High Contracting Parties at least one year before laying down the ships in question.¹

¹ *Proceedings of the London Naval Conference*, pp. 130-131.

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This modified Transactional Proposal formed the basis of discussion and was accepted with certain changes. It was generally agreed to draft the formula to read:

"That each power represented at the present Conference shall indicate, after an exchange of views with the other powers, how it will allocate its global figure."¹

The French table was amended so as to reconcile the alternative methods of limitation by global tonnage and by categories. This was done by the simple expedient, already envisaged in the Anglo-French Compromise of 1928, of grouping in one category all surface vessels armed with 6-inch guns and under. This grouping was applicable to the French and Italian Navies while the differentiation between small cruisers and destroyers was retained for Great Britain, the United States, and Japan. To meet Japanese demands, 10 per cent of the tonnage of the category into which transfer was to be made was permitted for small cruisers and destroyers. There were various reservations to this method of limiting naval armaments, but these dealt with figures, *e.g.* amount of transfer, delimitation of categories, etc., rather than with the method itself. Indeed, the method of limitation was quite generally accepted. The Conference took note of the report of the First Committee and decided, at its last meeting, to send it to the Preparatory Commission through the Secretary-General of the League of Nations with an explanatory letter by the Chairman of the Conference. This communication was sent on April 21, 1930.

The method of limiting naval armaments finally agreed upon was a real compromise measure which safeguarded the essential interests of the exponents both of global limitation and of limitation by categories. Great Britain insisted upon limitation by categories to eliminate all elements of surprise and building competition. France insisted on global limitation to permit her to build the small auxiliary surface vessels that suited her needs without having to conform to irksome tonnage and gunnage

¹ *Proceedings of the London Naval Conference* p. 125.

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limitations. The French Transactional Proposal of January 31, 1930, as modified in committee, met the essential interests of both sides. It provided for division of tonnage among the categories and limited possibilities of transfer to the various classes of surface craft under 10,000 tons. The percentage of transfer possible would be known—10 per cent for small cruisers and destroyers for Great Britain, the United States, and Japan and 100 per cent for France and Italy. The French Government had already accepted limitation of certain categories of ships at Washington and in the Anglo-French Compromise; it therefore did not in any way change its policy at London. The British Government had likewise agreed in the Anglo-French Compromise to allow complete freedom of building of auxiliary surface vessels armed with 6-inch guns or under. In accepting the French Transactional Proposal of January 1930, therefore, it merely renewed a position already taken.

The fourth meeting of the London Conference was held on February 11th to discuss the abolition of submarines proposed by the British delegation. Mr. A. V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, restated the arguments used by the British Government on many occasions and particularly at the Washington Conference. The United States, contrary to the attitude she had taken at the latter Conference, now supported the British Government in its demand for the abolition of submarines. The Italian delegation admitted the strength of the contentions both for and against abolition and stated that it shared the view that

“ . . . a discussion on the abolition of submarines would be in the interest of disarmament. We do not object, in principle, to the abolition of submarines, if all naval powers concur therein, and if such an abolition is to exert a decisive influence in bringing about that drastic reduction of armaments which the whole world desires.”¹

The French delegation renewed the case it had made at Washington in favour of retention of the submarine and in this it was seconded by the Japanese delegation. The problem was referred to the First Committee and from there to the committee of experts.

¹ *Proceedings of the London Naval Conference*, p. 91.

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The experts refused to discuss the problem and the First Committee could not agree. No agreement was reached on the abolition of the submarine.

When presenting its proposal for the abolition of the submarine the British Government had demanded a revival of the Washington regulations on the use of submarines in case abolition were not accepted. The French and American delegations had submitted resolutions calling for regulation of the use of submarines subjecting them to the rules of war governing surface craft. The Conference unanimously adopted the report of the Committee of Jurists declaring the following as established rules of international law:

“(i) In their action with regard to merchant ships, submarines must conform to the rules of international law to which surface war vessels are subject.

“(ii) In particular, except in the case of persistent refusal to stop on being duly summoned, or of active resistance to visit or search, a warship, whether surface vessel or submarine, may not sink or render incapable of navigation a merchant vessel without having first placed the passengers, crew, and ship's papers in a place of safety. For this purpose the ship's boats are not regarded as a place of safety unless the safety of the passengers and crew is assured, in the existing sea and weather conditions, by the proximity of land or the presence of another vessel which is in a position to take them on board.”¹

This declaration did not go as far as the one accepted at the Washington Conference which had never been ratified. Unlike the Washington declaration which placed a special onus on the use of submarines by declaring that they could not legally operate against merchantmen, prohibiting their use as commerce destroyers and attaching criminal sanctions to the violation of these rules by a submarine commander, the declaration adopted at London merely stated that submarines must conform to the same laws of war as surface vessels and summarized these laws for all warships, both submarine and surface.

Failing the abolition of submarines, the British Government insisted upon their strict qualitative and quantitative limitation

¹ *Proceedings of the London Naval Conference*, p. 166.

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"to the lowest possible limits that can be suggested."¹ The question of the qualitative limitation of the size of the submarine was referred to the First Committee, but it gave rise to special difficulties. The various powers represented at the Conference had been experimenting for years with submarines and, in the face of a qualitative competition, had built some very large units, much larger than the rest of their submarines. Thus the United States had the *V 4* with a surface displacement of 2,660 tons and were building the *V 5* and *V 6* of 2,730 tons each; all their other submarines were under 2,000 tons. Great Britain had the *X 1* of 2,425 tons and her next largest submarine was the *K 26* of 1,710 tons. Except for the *Surcouf* of 2,880 tons the French Government had only one submarine larger than 1,400 tons (*Halbroun*, 1,841 tons). Neither Italy nor Japan had any ship over 2,000 tons, although Japan had several of 1,955 tons.²

Under existing conditions, therefore, it would have been possible to agree upon 2,000 tons as the maximum individual displacement tonnage of submarines, but such limitation would have meant the scrapping of a few existing ships. The French Government was particularly unwilling to break up its new ship, the *Surcouf*, which was just being completed. Moreover, it maintained that it needed a limited number of submarines with a maximum displacement of 3,000 tons for the protection of its Empire. A compromise was arrived at which permitted all the Powers to retain their existing submarines and satisfied the demands of France. The maximum individual displacement tonnage of submarines was fixed at 2,000 tons. As an exception to this rule, each of the Signatory Powers was permitted to maintain not more than three submarines of a maximum individual displacement tonnage of 2,800 tons. The *Surcouf* was allowed within this class without prejudice to the limitation at 2,800 tons for other ships.

The same problem existed with regard to the qualitative limitation of gunnage of submarines. The *V 4*, *V 5*, and *V 6* of the

¹ *Proceedings of the London Naval Conference*, p. 81.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 178-188.

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United States Navy were armed with 6-inch guns and all other submarines of the American Navy carried guns 5-inch or less in calibre. The *X 1* carried four 5·2-inch guns but all other British submarines were armed with 4·7-inch guns or less. The *Surcouf* was the most powerfully armed submarine, having two 8-inch guns. Two French submarines carried 6·9-inch guns, otherwise the French Navy possessed no submarine with guns larger than 4·1-inch. The Italians had no submarines with guns over 4·7-inch, but the Japanese had several with 5·5-inch guns. The French delegation pressed for 6·1-inch (155 mm.) although it intimated that it was willing to reconsider. All delegations agreed to a maximum calibre of 5·1-inch (130 mm.). The final solution was the same as that adopted with regard to maximum individual displacement tonnages. The maximum calibre of gun to be mounted on a submarine was fixed at 5·1-inch (130 mm.). As an exception to this rule, the three submarines which could be of 2,800 tons individual displacement were permitted to increase this calibre to 6·1-inch (155 mm.). This provision did not prejudice the existing gunnage of the *Surcouf*, which could retain its 8-inch guns.

These qualitative limitations of the submarine were incorporated in Part II of the Treaty of London together with other general agreements regarding auxiliary vessels which complemented the accords of Washington. These had to do with the vessels which were exempt from limitation, special vessels, rules for replacement and disposal. There was also an article providing for exchange of information on any new construction within one month of laying down and completion respectively of each vessel of war other than those provided for at Washington. The specifications for the exempt vessels were the same as had been agreed upon by the experts at the Geneva Naval Conference of 1927. A list of special vessels not falling within these specifications and yet used as non-combatant units was drawn up for each High Contracting Party and included in the Treaty as an annex to Part II. The rules for replacement contained some measures of qualitative disarmament in that they limited the age for replace-

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ment. Surface vessels from 3,000 tons to 10,000 tons, *i.e.* cruisers, were considered to be over age and ready for replacement twenty years after the date of completion.¹ Surface vessels under 3,000 tons, *i.e.* very small cruisers and destroyers, were judged to have a useful life of sixteen years.² The life of a submarine was fixed at thirteen years. The age-limits for destroyers and submarines were those adopted by the experts at the Geneva Conference of 1927. That for cruisers had been proposed by the American delegation at Geneva while the British Government had suggested twenty-four years.

Another item in the agenda of the Conference on which there was general agreement was the postponement of replacement of capital ships until 1935. In its *note verbale* of October 1928 to the British Government, the Italian Government had suggested a replacement holiday for capital ships until 1936. In their preliminary conversations the British and American Governments had agreed to abandon replacement construction of capital ships until 1936 and to reach parity immediately. The only difficulty in the way of this proposal was created by the *Deutschland* and the new battleship building programme of Germany. The French Government sought to counter this programme by building three battleships of 23,000 tons each with 13-inch guns. Italy reserved to herself the possibility of doing likewise. This difficulty was met by allowing France and Italy to use the 70,000 tons of capital ships allowed them before 1930 under the Washington Treaty. It was therefore agreed in Part I of the London Naval Treaty that the Powers should not "exercise their rights to lay down the keels of capital ship replacement tonnage during the years 1931-1936." This agreement did not affect replacement of ships accidentally lost or destroyed or the right of Italy and France to the tonnage they were entitled to before 1930. The right of replacement was not lost but merely postponed. Moreover, in order to reach immediately the parity foreseen for 1936, Great Britain agreed to dispose of five capital ships (*Benbow*, *Iron Duke*,

¹ Sixteen years in the case of ships laid down before January 1, 1920.

² Twelve years in the case of ships laid down before January 1, 1921.

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Marlborough, *Emperor of India*, and *Tiger*). The United States disposed of three ships (*Florida*, *Utah*, and *Arkansas* or *Wyoming*) while Japan disposed of one (*Hiyei*). All other existing capital ships might be retained during the term of the Treaty.

During the discussions on the limitation of auxiliary surface vessels, the problem of the allocation of aeroplane carriers other than those defined by the Treaty of Washington was brought to the attention of the First Committee. It was agreed to amend the definition of aircraft carriers contained in the Washington Treaty so as to include ships under 10,000 tons:

“The expression ‘aircraft carrier’ includes any surface vessel of war, whatever its displacement, designed for the specific and exclusive purpose of carrying aircraft and so constructed that aircraft can be launched therefrom and landed thereon.”¹

The Treaty provided, however, that the fitting of a landing platform on a ship did not make it an aircraft carrier unless it was built exclusively for that purpose. No existing capital ship might have such a platform. No aircraft carrier of 10,000 tons or less might have a gun above 6·1-inch (155 mm.) in calibre.² The new regulations regarding aircraft carriers and the agreements on capital ships were included in Part I of the London Naval Treaty.

The capital ship replacement holiday and the quantitative reduction in capital ships applicable to Great Britain, the United States, and Japan, the qualitative limitation on the gunnage of aircraft carriers under 10,000 tons, the qualitative limitation on the maximum individual displacement tonnage and maximum calibre of guns of submarines, the rules governing their use against merchantmen, the provisions for exempt vessels, special vessels, and the rules for the exchange of information, for replacement and disposal were all the provisions of the Treaty subscribed to by all Powers

¹ Article 3 of the London Naval Treaty.

² Wherever 6-inch was used in the Washington Treaty it was now amended to 6·1-inch to permit the 155-mm. gun.

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represented at the Conference. On the most important issues of quantitative limitation of auxiliary craft, no agreement of all Powers was possible, but only a Three-Power Agreement of Great Britain, the United States, and Japan.

This was due to the fact that there existed no general political arrangement of which the reduction and limitation of the naval armaments of France and Italy could be made a part. Any system of equilibrium taking into consideration French and Italian naval armaments would also have to take into account their military and air armaments. The Kellogg Pact had been signed without having been made part of a new political equilibrium and could not now serve as the basis for limitation of naval armaments. It merely took away from armaments all *raison d'être*, if sincerely applied. The French Government, in the memorandum of December 20, 1929, had rejected it as insufficient basis for reduction and limitation of armaments because it contained no provision for enforcement. Reduction of armaments could be made only in exchange for security agreements which really safeguarded French interests and would make war in Europe less likely. As long as there were no political arrangements in which the loss of diplomatic bargaining power to France and Italy from a reduction of their naval force would be offset by some corresponding advantage, there could be no possibility of reaching a five-power treaty for the limitation of naval armaments.

With Great Britain, the United States, and Japan the situation was different. They were so far from each other that only their navies could be used as means of pressure against one another. The place where they could most effectively be used was the Pacific Ocean. The Washington Conference had struck a balance of power in the Pacific whereby each nation was supreme in its own waters. An essential part of this balance of power was the limitation of the naval armaments of each Power on the basis of a ratio of 5-5-3. The European problem of the British Navy prevented, at Washington, the extension of the 5-5-3 ratio to the limitation of auxiliary ships. Although the European diffi-

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culties of the British situation had not disappeared, the British Government was now willing, in view of the existing political situation, for a strictly limited time and with the possibility of escape offered by Article 21, to accept limitations of its auxiliary vessels at a level sufficiently low to meet American demands. The Japanese Government took advantage of the fact that auxiliary ships had been left unlimited by the Washington Conference to secure a more favourable ratio in this class. No new political arrangement was necessary to permit the limitation of the auxiliary craft of the British, American, and Japanese Navies. On the basis of the political transactions of 1922 the London Conference was able to register a quantitative limitation of the auxiliary vessels of Great Britain, the United States, and Japan, thereby completing the work left unfinished at Washington.

The limitation of the auxiliary vessels of Great Britain, the United States, and Japan was incorporated in Part III of the London Naval Treaty of 1930. There the arrangements made by the British and American Governments during their conversations of 1929 were extended to include the Japanese Navy. This was done without much difficulty. The three Powers first agreed upon a definition of cruisers and destroyers by fixing the tonnage and gunnage limitations of each category. Cruisers were defined as "surface vessels of war, other than capital ships or aircraft carriers, the standard displacement of which exceeds 1,850 tons (1,880 metric tons), or with a gun above 5·1-inch (130 mm.) calibre." They were divided in two sub-categories: (a) those carrying guns above 6·1-inch calibre and (b) those carrying guns under 6·1-inch calibre. Destroyers were defined as "surface vessels of war the standard displacement of which does not exceed 1,850 tons (1,880 metric tons), and with a gun not above 5·1-inch (130 mm.) calibre." They also were divided in two sub-categories: destroyer leaders which could be of the maximum tonnage and destroyers which could not exceed 1,500 tons maximum displacement.

On the basis of this classification, which corresponded to the figures set at Geneva in 1927, the three Powers agreed to limit

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the cruiser, destroyer, and submarine tonnages they should possess on December 31, 1936. As had been foreseen in the Anglo-American conversations, Great Britain¹ was permitted fifteen cruisers of sub-category A with a total tonnage of 146,800 tons. The United States could have eighteen of these cruisers with a total tonnage of 180,000 tons and Japan twelve with a total tonnage of 108,400. Of cruisers in sub-category B, Great Britain could have 192,200 tons, the United States 143,500 tons, and Japan 100,450 tons. Not more than 25 per cent of these cruisers could be equipped with landing platforms for aircraft. Great Britain and the United States were allowed 150,000 tons of destroyers while Japan was allowed 105,500 tons. Not more than 16 per cent of this tonnage could be used in destroyer leaders. The tonnage of submarines was the same for all three Powers, 52,700 tons. There was a possibility of transfer of 10 per cent of the category into which the transfer was made between cruisers of sub-category B and destroyers. The United States had the option of building only fifteen cruisers of sub-category A and using the tonnage thus liberated in sub-category B on the basis of 15,166 tons for every cruiser. If she did decide to build the eighteen cruisers the last three could be completed only in 1936, 1937, and 1938 respectively. The Treaty further provided for replacement of certain ships in such a way as to provide continuous employment in the ship yards.²

These qualitative limitations imposed upon the navies of the three signatory Powers completed the limitations fixed at Washington. The navies were now limited quantitatively in all classes of ships as well as qualitatively in each class. Both at

¹ While Great Britain is used here for obvious reasons, the Treaty imposed the obligations on the British Commonwealth of Nations, thereby limiting the right of the Dominions to fleets independent of the British Fleet.

² The Treaty provided that *Effingham* and *Frobisher* might be disposed of during the year 1936. Total British replacement of cruiser tonnage before December 31, 1936, could not exceed 91,000 tons. Japan could replace *Tama* by construction to be finished in 1936. In 1935 and 1936 Japan could lay down 5,200 tons of destroyers to replace those coming over-aged in 1938 and 1939 and 19,200 tons of submarines, of which not more than 12,000 tons could be completed by December 31, 1936 (Article 20).

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Washington and at London the qualitative limitations were determined by the existing size of the units limited. Likewise the quantitative limitations were fixed at the existing *status quo* in immediately available force. Through these limitations it was possible to know the number and size of vessels which might be in each navy by December 31, 1936. The capital ships and aircraft carriers had been regulated at Washington in 1922. At London it was the turn of cruisers, destroyers, and submarines. Capital ship tonnage and tonnage of aircraft carriers had been allocated on the basis of the 5-5-3 ratio. This ratio was not strictly applied at London. An equal tonnage of submarines had been allowed to each Power, thereby applying a system of all around parity. This was made necessary by the suggestion of Admiral Field reported in the Anglo-Japanese memorandum of July 18, 1927, that Great Britain, the United States, and Japan should each have 60,000 tons of submarines. Since both Great Britain and the United States advocated the abolition of submarines and were prepared to accept a low tonnage allowance, the lowest tonnage to which the Japanese could agree was the one fixed, 52,700 tons, and this on condition of parity with the other Powers. In view of the rest of the settlement this was granted without much difficulty.

The ratio established at Washington was not applied to destroyer tonnage. In their pre-conference negotiations the British and American Governments had temporarily agreed to a total destroyer tonnage of 125,000 to 150,000 tons. In view of the existing French submarine tonnage and the failure to limit their future naval building programme, the British Government pressed for the higher figure and it accepted this figure only under the reservation of Article 21.¹ The tonnage of Japan was again fixed at a higher figure than would have warranted strict application of the Washington ratio. A total of 105,500 tons of destroyers gave her a ratio of 10-10-7, the one she had claimed at Washington and ever since. This deviation from the Washington ratio on which was based the whole equilibrium in the Pacific was politically

¹ Cf. 249 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1270; Cmd. 3547 of 1930.

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expedient, as had been the settlement regarding submarines, in view of the figures agreed upon for cruisers.

The figures adopted for cruisers of both sub-categories were practically those foreseen in the Anglo-American conversation. Great Britain was allowed 339,000 tons of cruisers as agreed upon, giving her fifteen cruisers of sub-category A and thirty-five of sub-category B. The total cruiser tonnage for the United States was slightly higher than that foreseen, but the principle applied was the one agreed upon. The United States was to have three more cruisers of sub-category A while Great Britain could have six more cruisers of sub-category B. Should the United States decide not to build the three large cruisers, she could have the six small ones. The Japanese had entered the conference demanding 70 per cent of the largest tonnage in cruisers of sub-category A. Although they were allowed to retain twelve cruisers of that sub-category, as they had demanded, their tonnage compared to that allowed to the Americans amounted to slightly more than 60 per cent. When compared to the British tonnage in cruisers of that sub-category, the percentage increased to almost 74 per cent. Their total cruiser tonnage, however, amounted to only 61 per cent of the total British cruiser tonnage. The deviations from the Washington ratio were only in the lesser auxiliary craft and did not much change the relation of the fleets; the equilibrium necessary for the balance of power arrangement in the Pacific had been maintained.

The London Naval Conference of 1930 had succeeded in its immediate aim. The avowed purpose of the Conference had been to extend the agreements of Washington to the auxiliary vessels left unlimited. This purpose was accomplished by the quantitative limitations of cruisers, destroyers, and submarines imposed on the British, American, and Japanese Navies. The agreements of Washington had concerned these Powers alone. France and Italy were brought in that Conference because their naval policy was bound to influence that of Great Britain. No political arrangement was concluded at Washington which permitted a real limitation of naval armaments which included France and Italy. Since neither

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of these two countries felt the need for either capital ships or aircraft carriers, they had agreed to limit their tonnage in these ships. France agreed for diplomatic reasons, while Italy agreed because she was granted parity with France. That the Washington Agreements included France and Italy was therefore purely incidental. The main arrangements concerned only Great Britain, the United States, and Japan. That is why the London Conference which complemented the work begun at Washington was able to achieve quantitative results only with regard to the British, American, and Japanese Fleets. This result might have been achieved at Geneva but for the question of cruiser needs of Great Britain and the United States. Without an adjustment of this question the total tonnage figure for cruisers proposed by the British Government was too high to be accepted by the American delegation. With the decrease in the British demand for cruisers from seventy to fifty, and an adjustment for meeting British and American cruiser needs, the only obstacle in the way of agreement at Geneva was removed and the success of the London Naval Conference was assured.

Part III of the London Naval Treaty checked the naval building competition among Great Britain, the United States, and Japan until 1936. The limitations on the cruiser tonnage meant that Great Britain would not construct the two 10,000-ton cruisers of the 1928 programme or the one of the 1929 programme which had all been postponed pending arrangements with the United States in naval building. Completion of the ships already laid down would provide the fifteen 8-inch cruisers allowed the British Commonwealth of Nations. The tonnage for 6-inch cruisers permitted only replacement of over-age ships. In the United States, the limitations on cruiser tonnage cut the projected programme of twenty-three 8-inch gun 10,000-ton cruisers to fifteen to be completed before 1936, with the option of three more to be completed in 1936, 1937, and 1938 respectively. The United States was merely carrying out long postponed cruiser construction. Japan retained her existing figure of twelve 8-inch gun cruisers and was allowed no fresh construction except for

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replacement.¹ Regarding destroyers, the existing position was maintained and provision was made for replacement only. The total tonnage of submarines foreseen in each navy by the end of 1936 was considerably lower than the total tonnage built, building, or authorized in each country in January 1930.² The London Naval Treaty, therefore, called for reduction, to be applied in the course of the following years, in the tonnage of submarines of each of the contracting parties.

There were also secondary agreements of great importance registered at the London Conference. One of the most important of these was the agreement among the Five Powers represented on the method of limiting naval armaments. Disagreement on this question had been one of the main causes for the delay of the Preparatory Commission in reaching a model draft convention on the basis of which the Council could call a general Disarmament Conference. Now that the five large Naval Powers were in accord the Preparatory Commission could resume its sixth session with the prospect of soon completing its work. No less important than this agreement was the decision taken regarding the qualitative limitations of submarines. Ever since the war there had existed a qualitative competition in the size and armament of submarines and it was necessary to put an end to this competition if the other agreements were not to be placed in jeopardy. Also of importance was the arrangement regarding capital ships. This agreement provided that replacement of capital ships for the years 1930 to 1936 would be postponed until after the conference to be held in 1935 and that the parity foreseen for 1935 would be reached at once. The other general agreements, regarding exempt vessels, special vessels, rules for publicity, replacement, and disposal, cleared the ground of the technical problems which might have arisen in the Preparatory Commission and in the general Disarmament Conference and prepared for

¹ *Vide* statement of Mr. Alexander to the House of Commons on April 30, 1930; 238 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 181-182.

² In January 1930, the following tonnage of submarines was built, building, or authorized in: British Empire, 63,324 tons; the United States, 68,720 tons; Japan, 77,842 tons (237 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 2655-2656).

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the eventual inclusion in the Treaty of quantitative limitations of the naval armaments of France and Italy.

The conclusion of the London Naval Treaty marked an important development in the history of the British Navy: for the first time in its existence the British Navy was completely limited in strength by an international agreement. Throughout all vicissitudes of history one principle had guided British policy regarding the Navy, that Englishmen should "keep the Admiralty, that we be masters of the Narrow Seas" because, as a Commons' petition of about 1417 remarked "the Navy is the great support of wealth, profit and prosperity of the realm."¹ At the time of Queen Elizabeth it had been thought necessary to maintain a navy equal to that of any other sovereign. The same policy was advocated under James I. The condition of the Navy varied, however, with the changes in sovereigns and the state of their exchequer. After it had fought the Spanish, the Dutch, and the French, the British Navy emerged from the Napoleonic Wars in complete mastery of the seas. From this unchallenged position, it fell into decline during the nineteenth century. In 1889 Lord George Hamilton laid down the maintenance of a Two-Power Standard as the aim of the revived British Navy. As interpreted by Lord Cawdor to mean 10 per cent superiority over the total tonnage of the next two European navies (*i.e.* France and Russia), this standard remained the guide of the Admiralty's policy until 1912. In that year Winston Churchill laid down the new principle of 60 per cent superiority over Germany in dreadnoughts.²

The British Navy emerged from the war of 1914-1918 indisputable mistress of the seas. A new rival, however, had sprung up in the West which claimed the right to share this mastery of the seas. This claim was met at the Washington Conference at which, without abandoning its past policy of the Two-Power Standard, the British Government admitted the right of the United States to parity in battle strength with the British Navy.

¹ Quoted in Traill, H. D. (ed.), *Social England*, II, p. 339. Cf. *supra*, pp. 22-30.

² The policy announced by Mr. Churchill came to an end with the collapse of Germany and the reduction of her Navy.

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This admission was incorporated in the equilibrium of power in the Pacific set up by the Conference of Washington of 1922. In becoming a party to this balance-of-power agreement, the British Government did not depart from its traditional policy of two-power strength in European waters but merely recognized a fact—that in the Far West and in the Far East had arisen nations which could maintain control of their own waters. Great Britain, herself, in signing the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 had surrendered to Japan any claim she might have had to the domination of Far Eastern waters. Likewise, the pre-war policy of ignoring the naval growth of the United States points to the fact that Great Britain held no claim to the control of American waters. In accepting parity with the United States and a navy with a margin of only two-thirds superiority over the Japanese, the British Government did not therefore jeopardize the essential interests of the Empire, because it still maintained as far as Europe was concerned, the Two-Power Standard.

There was one obligation undertaken by the Government at Washington and London which was entirely novel: it undertook to place certain quantitative and qualitative limitations upon the British Navy. For the first time in history it bound itself not to increase the size of its navy beyond limits laid down in an international Convention. It is important to note, however, that this new obligation was agreed to with the express reservation that the limitations imposed were accepted only so long as they still permitted the British Navy to maintain its supremacy in European, Indian, and South Pacific waters. When, after eight years of diplomatic interchanges, the limitations begun at Washington were completed in London these complete limitations of the British Navy were again accepted only with the aforementioned reservation, and provision was made in the Treaty itself for the eventual defection of Great Britain should the European situation demand it. Making a survey of British sea power from 1900 to 1930 before the Royal Institute of Naval Architects on March 25, 1931, Sir Archibald Hurd concluded that the British Fleet remained on something higher than a

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Two-Power Standard as that standard was interpreted in the past in relation to European fleets only; that its position in European waters was at least as strong as it had been in 1900 before the rise of the German Navy; that Great Britain was still the supreme sea Power in the focal areas of her sea trade in European waters.¹

¹ *The Times*, March 26, 1931. On November 30, 1932, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir B. Eyres Monsell, stated before the House of Commons: "If, firstly, we take into consideration the Escalator Clause, and if, secondly—and this, to my mind, is the important thing—we are allowed steadily to pursue the replacement programme that we have been pursuing since 1930, I say with perfect frankness to the House . . . that I do not think they need feel any undue alarm at the present situation. I do not think they need feel any undue alarm that the British Navy will not be able to carry out its proper functions" (272 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 884).

CHAPTER III

BRITISH ATTITUDE ON NAVAL DISARMAMENT (*Continued*)

The British Navy After the London Naval Conference

WITH the British Navy limited to a definite tonnage to be reached by December 31, 1936, the task of the British Government, on the morrow of the London Naval Conference, was to consolidate the position of the navy by a building programme which would ensure necessary replacement within the accepted limitations. The Government had also to consider the building programme of France and Italy who had not yet reached agreement. Answering a question in the House of Commons on May 7, 1930, Mr. Alexander assured the House that the Admiralty was aware of the Italian building programme and would take it into consideration when making its own programme. "The naval defence of this country must always be relative as well as absolute." This was the reason why England had demanded the inclusion of the "Escalator Clause" (Article 21) in the Treaty of London.¹ Bearing in mind these considerations, Mr. Alexander formulated the naval construction programme for 1930. This programme which included three cruisers of the 6-inch type, one flotilla of destroyers—one leader and eight destroyers—three submarines, four sloops, and one netlayer and target towing vessel,² was strictly a replacement programme and did not take into account the large number of submarines being built by Italy and France. The British Government still hoped the French and Italian Governments would accede to Part III of the London Naval Treaty by fixing satisfactory quantitative limitations to their tonnage.

Negotiations between the French and Italian Governments were carried on intermittently after the adjournment of the

¹ 238 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 948.

² 240 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1118; Cmd. 3506 of 1930.

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London Naval Conference.¹ The experts of both countries participated, and they were sometimes assisted by British experts. These negotiations continued during the winter. In February, Mr. Henderson, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, proceeded to Paris and Rome to bring the negotiations to a head. As a result of these visits the French and Italian Governments came to a complete accord on "Bases of Agreement" which were published on March 1, 1931. These terms, which did not prejudice the settlement of 1936, had to be approved by the British Commonwealth of Nations, the United States, and Japan before they were drafted in their final form.

The first provisions of these "Bases of Agreement" had to do with the capital ships which France and Italy had intimated their intention of building. The total tonnage of capital ships fixed at Washington for France and Italy had been raised from 175,000 tons to 181,000 tons in order to allow these two countries to build two new capital ships without scrapping any existing tonnage. It was agreed, however, that France should scrap two ships of the *Diderot* Class, which could have been kept indefinitely under the Washington Agreement, while Italy was to scrap approximately equivalent tonnage (33,640 tons) of first-class over-age cruisers. The new capital ships could not exceed 23,333 tons displacement or carry a gun more than 12-inch in calibre. France and Italy had first planned on 13-inch guns, but, at the instance of the British Admiralty which favoured decrease of the maximum gunnage of all capital ships, they agreed to 12-inch as a maximum limit. The British Government promised to the French Government a written assurance that it favoured 12-inches as the maximum calibre of guns of capital ships, and a substantial reduction in the size of these ships.²

It was agreed at the same time that France and Italy might

¹ For a complete story of these negotiations *vide* Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs*, 1931, pp. 259-278.

² 249 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1218. In the capital ship laid down in 1932, the French Government reverted to the 13-inch gun.

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complete respectively, before December 31, 1936, 34,000 tons of aircraft carriers. The two Governments were to give each other "as long notice as possible of their intention to seek parliamentary authority for the construction" of the capital ships or aircraft carriers. Furthermore, they agreed to conform to certain definite rules in preparing their programme for construction of other vessels to be completed before the end of 1936. In the first place, neither Government was to lay down cruisers with guns greater than 6·1-inch (155 mm.) calibre. In the second place, the two Governments agreed that their tonnage of new construction of surface vessels with guns of 6·1-inch (155 mm.) or less should not exceed the tonnage which was replaceable in this category before the end of 1936. Vessels over age were to be scrapped on being replaced unless the French or Italian Government should prefer to scrap an equivalent tonnage of over age large cruisers.

As a part of this arrangement, the British, French, and Italian Governments declared their intention of not replacing destroyers which would be under sixteen years by December 31, 1936.¹ This was another concession to the views of the British Government which had tried vainly since the Geneva Conference to extend the life of destroyers. The London Naval Treaty had fixed the life of destroyers at sixteen years, but only for those laid down after January 1, 1921. Those laid down before that date had a life of twelve years. The only effect of this concession on the life of destroyers was to delay, until at least January 1, 1937, the laying down of the replacement of destroyers over age before December 31, 1936.² This was favourable to the British who wanted to spread their destroyer replacement to provide steady employment in the dockyards. It enabled them to forgo the

¹ This provision did not prejudice the right of replacement under the London Naval Treaty in case the present Franco-Italian Agreement were brought to an end as the result of the General World Disarmament Conference of 1932.

² This was one of the points over which negotiations were later to come to grief. The French Government interpreted the agreement to mean that the destroyers could not be completed before December 31, 1936, but they could be laid down. Such interpretation rendered the agreement devoid of all meaning since that obligation was already undertaken in the London Treaty.

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complete replacement of destroyers allowed under the London Naval Treaty.

In the third place, the French and Italian Governments agreed to limit new construction of submarines to the completion of the 1930 programme and the replacement of vessels over-aged after December 31, 1931. Submarines over-aged before this date were to be scrapped unless scrapping would result in the total submarine tonnage falling below the figure set in Article 16 of the London Naval Treaty for the three largest naval Powers, namely 52,700 tons. This arrangement gave France 81,989 tons of submarines built or building which would be under age by the end of 1936. The French Government would be satisfied with no less. The British Admiralty, however, could not admit 81,989 tons of submarines for France in view of its own destroyer figure of 150,000 tons. This figure was accepted only pending a satisfactory solution at the Disarmament Conference of 1932. In the event of failure to reduce French submarine tonnage at this Conference the British Government retained its right, under Article 21 of the London Naval Treaty, to increase its destroyer tonnage. It claimed this right as long as France should have more than 80,000 tons of submarines.¹

This position was made clear in the Franco-Italian "Bases of Agreement" announced on March 1, 1931.

"Subject to a general revision of the naval question in the course of the Disarmament Conference of 1932, the tonnage of French submarines in commission will not exceed, up to December 31, 1936, the figure of 81,989 tons, representing at the present moment the under-age tonnage of vessels built or building. The Members of the British Commonwealth of Nations maintain that this figure of 81,989 tons is too high in relation to their destroyer figure of 150,000 tons under the London Naval Treaty, but they agree to notify the other signatories of Part III of the Treaty of London that they will not have recourse to Article 21 of the London Treaty pending the general revision of the naval question mentioned above. Should it not be possible at the 1932 conference to arrive at a satisfactory equilibrium between the French submarine tonnage and British Commonwealth destroyer tonnage, the

¹ 249 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1163-1164, 1220, 1270.

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Members of the British Commonwealth of Nations will retain their right to make such increase as they may judge necessary in their destroyer figure of 150,000 tons."¹

An attempt was made to draft these "Bases of Agreement" into an accord to be signed by the British Commonwealth of Nations, France, and Italy. Difficulties soon arose regarding the replacement of light surface vessels. These difficulties proved insurmountable in spite of long negotiations in which British experts participated. Finally, the "Bases of Agreement" were declared dead, but both Governments conformed to the provisions contained therein in their 1931 and 1932 building programmes. In spite of the failure of the "Bases of Agreement" the British Government did not increase its building programme or use its right to do so under Article 21 of the London Treaty. The five capital ships mentioned in Part I of the Treaty were withdrawn from active service during 1930. The new building programme, as announced in the Statement of the First Lord on March 2, 1931, was merely one of replacement similar to the 1930 programme: 3 cruisers (2 *Leanders* of 7,500 tons and 1 *Arethusa* of about 5,000 tons) armed with 6-inch guns, 1 flotilla of destroyers, 4 sloops, 3 submarines, 1 shallow-draught gunboat, 1 tender for *Vernon*, 1 gate vessel for defence booms.² The programme for 1932 was almost the same, the changes being in the small vessels.³ The British Government decided not to take the French and Italian programmes into consideration until the end of the Disarmament Conference. The building policy of the Admiralty was explained in a statement of the First Lord, Sir Bolton Eyres Monsell, on November 30, 1932.

"In cruiser tonnage we are building up to the limit allowed; in destroyers and submarines we are not. We are readily facing the position of having some of these ships over age in 1936, because we think it is even more important to have a steady replacement programme."⁴

¹ Cmd. 3812 of 1931, p. 6.

² Cmd. 3799 of 1931.

³ Cmd. 4024 of 1932.

⁴ 272 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 883. A similar statement was made by Lord Stanley on November 29, 1933 (283 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 860-861).

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The programme for 1933, as published on February 28, 1933, still reflected the policy announced by the First Lord the preceding autumn. New construction was almost the same except that four cruisers were provided instead of three, one *Leander* and three *Arethusas*.¹ Before these could be laid down, however, Sir Bolton announced to the House of Commons on November 14, 1933, that the Admiralty was contemplating an alteration in the 1933 building programme. This programme had included one *Leander* Class cruiser of 7,250 tons and three *Arethusas* of 5,400 tons, each with eight and six 6-inch guns respectively. "The policy of building cruisers of comparatively small tonnage had been adopted in the hope that others nations would follow our lead."² Unfortunately there was no such result.

"In 1931 Japan laid down two cruisers of 8,500 tons reported to mount 15 6-inch guns. It is learnt that she is now laying down two more of the same dimensions, and that the construction of yet another two, making six in all, is projected. The United States also have already announced the intention of building four cruisers of 10,000 tons, each with 15 6-inch guns. If, therefore, our programme already approved were to be carried out, the new cruisers would be definitely inferior to those being developed by other Powers."

In view of the limitation imposed on cruiser tonnage, the Admiralty proposed to replace the four cruisers by three, two of which were to be of a new type of 9,000 tons with increased armament, and one *Arethusa*. The failure to limit the size of 6.1-inch cruisers at the London Conference, a limitation for which the British delegation had pressed, was leading to another building competition in which the British Admiralty was forced to follow the lead of other Powers. "Nevertheless," Sir Bolton further stated, "it will be the continued policy of the Government to endeavour by common agreement both to restrict the number of vessels of the larger size as much as possible, and also to

¹ Cmd. 4266 of 1933.

² On March 7, 1932, Sir Bolton Eyres Monsell had said: "We want cruisers—not big cruisers, but light cruisers lightly armed, which are not a danger or a menace to anybody at all, but a menace only to commerce destroyers. Although we want small cruisers we want plenty of them" (262 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1503).

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reduce the maximum size of cruisers to be constructed in the future.”¹

The policy of building large 6-inch cruisers was carried over in the 1934 programme, which provided for 4 cruisers, 3 *Minotaur*s, of 9,000 tons and 1 *Arethusa*. The rest of the programme, with the exception of one aircraft carrier, was similar to those of the preceding years. These ships, with the exclusion of the cruisers which would not be commissioned until 1937, completed the number of new ships to be added to the British Navy before the end of the London Naval Treaty.² By the end of 1936, the British Navy was to have the full tonnage allowed under the Treaty. The Government had built to the full allowance of 91,000 tons of new cruisers and were beginning, in 1934, the replacement of those over age before January 1, 1937. This replacement tonnage plus that of 1937 and 1938 amounted to 67,500 tons, and the Government proposed to lay down 32,000 tons in 1934, similar programmes being planned for 1935 and 1936. Although the British Navy would have its allowed tonnage of destroyers before the end of 1936, 60,000 tons out of the 150,000 tons would be over age and due for replacement under the Treaty. Similarly, 4,000 tons of submarines would be over age. Replacement in these two categories had been delayed so as to ensure steady replacement.³ In the debates on Imperial Defence on March 21, 1934, the Prime Minister denied the implication that building up to Treaty strength was not consistent with the spirit of the Treaty.

“Not only that, but in building up to the limits now set, those who took part in the London Naval Treaty were informed by the British representatives that, in agreeing to the figures, we had no margin, and that by 1935-1936 they would have to assume and to expect that every ton we said we required would be built up to.”⁴

¹ 281 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 737-738. Before coming to the decision to build large 6-inch cruisers, the British Government had asked the American Government whether it could not defer the laying down of its 10,000-ton 6-inch cruisers until after the conference of 1935. The American Government saw no reason for doing this (*The New York Times*, September 19, 1933).

² Cmd. 4523 of 1934. ³ 287 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 42-44. ⁴ *Ibid.*, col. 1239.

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The World Disarmament Conference, February 2, 1932—?

The first part of the sixth session of the Preparatory Commission was adjourned on May 6, 1929, because it was thought best not to proceed with the second reading of the draft Convention until the Naval Powers had agreed upon a method of limiting naval armaments. At London, in January 1930, the Naval Powers had come to an agreement upon the question at issue, and had instructed the Chairman of the Conference to send the report of the First Committee containing their agreement, to the Secretary-General for distribution among the members of the League and the Preparatory Commission. With this favourable report, the second part of the sixth session of the Preparatory Commission was opened at Geneva on November 6, 1930. On December 9th the Commission had finished its work of drafting a model Convention to serve as the basis of discussion for the World Disarmament Conference.

At the opening of the second part of the sixth session, the Powers represented at London which were represented on the Preparatory Commission, *viz.* the United States, Great Britain, Canada, France, the Irish Free State, Italy, and Japan—met together to adapt the solutions foreseen at London to the draft of the model convention adopted at the first reading. They submitted a document containing this adaptation to the Preparatory Commission on November 10, 1930. This document proposed the method already outlined which had been agreed upon at London with the exception that the table combined cruisers and destroyers in a light surface vessels category which was applicable to all Powers. Since a proposed article safeguarded the continuance in full force of existing treaties, limitation by categories still applied to the large Naval Powers. The proposal of the seven delegations also embodied rules for replacement and disposal, a list of exempt vessels, and made provision for special vessels. The Italian Government renewed the reservation it had made in London that the "Italian Government is unable to accept any specific method for the limitation of naval arma-

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ments until ratios of strength and maximum levels of tonnage have been fixed by the different Powers.”¹

The draft proposed by the seven delegations came up for discussion on November 17th, and was referred to a sub-committee for consideration. This sub-committee was really the Preparatory Commission itself which had adjourned its plenary meeting to meet in sub-committee in order to permit the retirement of the delegations not interested in the problem. The sub-committee held five meetings from November 17th to 20th, and reached agreement on the draft before it. It was faced from the outset with an amendment by the Soviet delegation to replace the obligations of the proposed draft with undertakings by each of the High Contracting Parties to reduce their total tonnage by x per cent. The navies over 200,000 tons would, moreover, be limited by categories as well as by global tonnage. Lord Cecil who represented the British Government opposed the amendment on the ground that figures had to be fixed before a proportional reduction could be made. The Soviet amendment was rejected.

Discussion in the sub-committee centred about the problem of transfer. Various amendments to the draft proposal of the seven delegations were presented by the delegations whose object was to establish full freedom of transfer for small navies. Regarding these amendments Lord Cecil recalled the policy of the British Government, expressed repeatedly since 1927:

“I agree with the general proposition that the small Powers ought to have greater facilities of transfer than the large Powers. I am disposed to agree with that proposition, but to fix a general figure seems to me very difficult.

“ . . . and I think that, whatever is done in regard to transfers, some restriction in regard to submarines will be absolutely essential.”²

The problem was referred to a small committee which reported agreement on three principles to regulate transfer. These did not meet the objections of the British Government which insisted

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series X, pp. 142, 462.

² *Ibid.*, Series X, p. 160.

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on the strict limitation of submarines. A satisfactory solution was obtained by changing the order of the principles and limiting freedom of transfer to surface vessels. These principles which, according to a statement of Lord Cecil at a later meeting, had received the express approval of his Government, were:

"1. Account must be taken of the special circumstances of each Power and of the classes of ships involved in the transfer.

"2. Powers whose total tonnage does not exceed 100,000 tons¹ will have full freedom of transfer as regards surface ships.

"3. As regards the other Powers, the amount of transfer should vary in inverse ratio to the amount of total (global) tonnage of each of them."²

The rest of the proposed convention was adopted without much difficulty. A proposal was accepted for the subdivision of the capital ship category to differentiate between ships-of-the-line and other vessels such as coast defence ships which, under the Washington Definition, would be considered capital ships. The British delegation proposed the addition of a new clause providing for limitation of budgetary expenditures on naval armaments. The reason for this proposal was the building of the *Deutschland*, whereby Germany had managed to create a very powerful ship within the imposed limitations by the use of expensive new building processes.³ Lord Cecil expressed this view: "You might have great improvements in speed, in guns, and in armour plating, all of which would be possible under the specific limitations provided for navies, but which would be controlled, more or less, by budgetary limitation—indeed, I think it would be controlled very accurately."⁴ The American delegation could not accept any budgetary limitation and, therefore, placed a reservation on the proposal. The Japanese delegation opposed it because, although it had supported budgetary limitation of land arma-

¹ This figure and others in the Convention were given merely as illustrations and did not bind the Conference.

² *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series X, p. 167.

³ Earlier, in the general discussion on the limitation of material, Lord Cecil had referred specifically to the new German ship to show that direct limitation was not sufficient to stop building competition (*ibid.*, Series X, p. 69).

⁴ *Ibid.*, Series X, p. 190.

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ments, it did not favour such limitation of naval armaments. The French delegation also opposed it because it objected to a combination of methods, direct and indirect. The proposal was nevertheless accepted.

The work of the sub-committee was approved by the Preparatory Commission at the third reading of the draft Convention. As finally adopted by the Commission, this draft Convention provided for the limitation of naval personnel, the average daily effectives (officers, petty officers, and men) in the sea armed forces and in the sea formations organized on a military basis. This had been agreed upon at the third session of the Preparatory Commission.

The draft Convention provided for the limitation of naval material on the following basis: (1) The High Contracting Parties would limit the global tonnage of their vessels of war for the length of the Convention; (2) they would indicate "by tonnage by category the way in which each High Contracting Party intends to distribute during the period of application of the present Convention the global tonnage which is limited in the case of such Party"; (3) within the limits of global tonnage and failing stricter provisions in special conventions, each Party could modify the distribution subject to the limitations set forth in an accompanying table but only after due notice had been given to the other Parties before laying down of the transferred tonnage; (4) capital ships, aircraft carriers, and submarines were limited qualitatively; (5) provisions were made to prevent evasion; (6) budgetary limitation of naval expenditures was provided for. Annexed to these limitations were lists of exempt and special vessels, definitions and rules for replacement and disposal. This formed the system which the Preparatory Commission recommended to the Council as basis for a general convention for the reduction and limitation of naval armaments.

The British Government took a leading part in the work of the Preparatory Commission. The task of this Commission was to classify the armaments to be limited and to define the methods of limiting them. At the outset, the British Government, like

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every other Government, advocated the limitation of the armaments which were particularly dangerous to Great Britain from the point of view of national strategy. It advocated the methods of limitation of armaments which safeguarded those needed for the execution of this strategy and limited those which could successfully oppose it. Anxious for the eventual disarmament of all Powers, the British Government, however, modified its views and accepted compromises so long as the armaments needed for carrying out British strategical conceptions were not too strictly limited to prevent their effective use. The compromises accepted were rather along the line of limiting armaments so as to allow to the other countries the forces they considered necessary for their own national strategy. The process of conciliation in the Preparatory Commission was an attempt to find a system of limitation of armaments which did not reflect any particular strategical conception.

The British Government had first advocated limitation of naval armaments by tonnage by categories with strict limitation of maximum tonnage and gunnage of each ship. This method best safeguarded British interests. In the face of strong opposition on the part of France and the small Naval Powers, the British Government was ready to concede to the small Powers the right of transfer of tonnage from one category to another. This original compromise was extended until the right of transfer was conceded to all navies in inverse proportion to their size, except for submarines. This new method of limiting armaments still safeguarded essential British interests, although not so effectively as had the original British project. A greater element of uncertainty had been introduced. Budgetary limitation of expenditures on naval armaments reduced this uncertainty and acted as a check on competition in quality of material. These limitations taken together with the limitations to be imposed on the other fighting services and the provisions for publicity and control made the draft Convention acceptable to the British Government. The Imperial Conference of 1930 approved of the principles underlying the draft Convention presented by the Preparatory Commission.

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"The Conference was, in general, further satisfied that the provisions of the draft Convention, with certain amendments, afforded an adequate basis for an effective system of disarmament."¹

The draft Convention and the forthcoming Disarmament Conference were received with enthusiasm in Great Britain. Both the Government and the people were pledged to international disarmament, and the action of the Government since the War had been directed toward securing such disarmament. The Navy and Army had been substantially reduced, while the Air Force had not been expanded as quickly as had the air forces in other countries. In view of the European situation, however, a reaction was beginning to set in. Speaking at Newcastle on February 7, 1931, Mr. A. V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, and a signer of the London Naval Treaty, said regarding British naval disarmament:

"I think you can go too quickly in this matter unless you can get other countries in Europe to go just as quickly as you. You find a steady decline in our naval expenditure and a steady rise in almost every other country, and you begin to ask whether it is a sane policy."²

He did not want any peace-lover to think he did not favour further disarmament, but it was a mistake to go on with a policy which meant constant fluctuation. This note was not echoed by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Henderson, who, two days later, labelled disarmament "the greatest of moral issues which our generation has to face." Speaking at Queen's Hall, he said:

"Europe to-day is as full of difficult political problems as it was five years ago, and I say, as the Foreign Minister of a great European Power, that it is in disarmament that the key to the peaceful solutions of these problems can be found."³

The British Government was still in favour of disarmament, and would participate in the World Disarmament Conference with full intention of doing all in its power to facilitate an inter-

¹ Cmd. 3717 of 1930, p. 39.

² *The Times*, February 9, 1931.

³ *Ibid.*, February 10, 1931.

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national convention limiting the armaments of all nations. Prime Minister MacDonald made quite clear the position of the Government in a statement to the House of Commons on April 29, 1931:

"I hope, in consequence of what has been done both by the reduction of military strength and by the increase of political security, agreement will be come to at that conference. I hope that agreement will enable the Government which will be here to prove by results the justification of the policy which has been revealed by what I have said to the Committee to-day, and that, after the chapter has been closed, the figures agreed to, the columns made, the assignment of this category of strength made, and the assignment of that made, it will be the happy position of the British Government to ask the House of Commons, and the Committee of the House of Commons, to back it in going on to make still further reductions in the cause of international agreement, removing still farther away than we have been able to as up to now the military causes of war, and strengthening and laying deeper and broader the only foundation upon which peace can rest—complete agreement and most friendly relations between all the nations of the world."¹

While this has remained the policy of the Government to the present, a corollary to this position developed at the same time and was brought out in Mr. MacDonald's speech. The disarmament which the Government favoured must now be international disarmament.

"The reduction must be all around. We have gone pretty nearly to the limit of example. I would appeal to every nation that is interested in peace and in disarmament to study those figures, and to admit and confess that one nation cannot by its own example bring about disarmament, and that it is the duty and responsibility of every one to join together and make that further disarmament possible by international agreements and arrangements."²

The same policy was stated even more clearly by the Lord President of the Council, Mr. Baldwin, at the Guildhall Banquet on November 9, 1932:

"The time has now come to an end when Great Britain can proceed with unilateral disarmament. . . .

"But though what I have said about unilateral disarmament be true,

¹ 254 *H.C. Debts.*, 5 s., cols. 919-920.

² *Ibid.*, col. 916.

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yet we are as desirous as any country in the world to proceed, and to proceed rapidly, with that substantial disarmament throughout the world that we believe is essential to the cause of peace, and to this end our endeavours will be devoted at Geneva.”¹

With the report of the Preparatory Commission and the model Draft Convention before it, the Council, at its sixty-sixth session on January 24, 1931, resolved to convene the General Disarmament Conference on February 2, 1932, at Geneva. On this day, the representatives of fifty-nine nations gathered to draw up a convention limiting and reducing the national armaments of each nation. During the general discussion which lasted from February 8th to 24th, all the delegates presented their proposals. The first speaker in this discussion was Sir John Simon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom. In his address, Sir John laid down in general terms the proposals which had been studied by the sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence on which the leaders of all three Parties were represented. The United Kingdom delegation was later to develop these proposals in detail:

“And as practical men we must recognize, as it seems to me, that the limitation of armaments by international agreements can only be brought about by the use of one or both of two methods of treatment. One is the method of fixing maximum limits beyond which we severally bind ourselves not to go; the other is the method of excluding by international agreement from use in warfare certain defined instruments or methods, and for both these modes of treatment we require, as a further safeguard, some international authority which will effectively secure that these limitations are not overstepped, by ascertaining and making known cases of transgression with a view to bringing effective world pressure upon the wrongdoer.

“I desire to announce on behalf of the Government of Great Britain that we advocate both these methods of treatment, and will do our utmost, in loyal and friendly co-operation with the other States of the world, to help to devise and bring into effect plans to apply them.”²

Sir John Simon then examined in detail the application of the principles he had laid down. The weapons and methods

¹ *The Times*, November 10, 1932.

² *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Records of Plenary Meetings, I, p. 57.

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of warfare which he proposed to outlaw as more inhuman than others, were gases, the submarine, and bombing from the air. He particularly insisted upon the abolition of the submarine because it "involves, however involuntarily perhaps, a greater degree of inhumanity than is to be found in almost any other type of warfare."¹ Sir John presented the opinion of His Majesty's Government that the best way of achieving positive results in naval armaments was for the Conference to maintain the Washington and London Naval Treaties and build the general Convention on the assumption of their continued existence. Before concluding he again referred to the policy of the British Government on the reduction of naval armaments, intimating that

"... we, the British delegation, are ready to co-operate in whatever methods are found most practicable for agreed reduction in the size of ships and of maximum gun calibre as well as in any practical application of the principle of prohibiting land guns above a certain calibre."²

On February 22nd these proposals were presented to the Conference in a summary form:

"The United Kingdom Delegation, while of opinion that the Draft Convention provides the best groundwork on which to proceed, suggests that special attention should be directed to such prohibitions and limitations as will weaken the attack and so remove temptation from aggression, and to methods of warfare which are specially liable to cause injury to non-combatants. In particular, it suggests. . . .

"3. The abolition (and prohibition) of submarines as a humanitarian measure;

"4. Consideration of the most practical method of reducing the size of men-of-war and the maximum calibre of guns carried by them. . . ."³

The British proposals at the World Disarmament Conference followed the established lines of British naval policy. One of the first principles of that policy lay in the abolition of the submarine. Although in possession of the largest submarine fleet in the world at the time, the British delegation at the Peace Conference had pressed for the abolition of the submarine. The only result of

¹ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Records of Plenary Meetings, I, p. 58.

² *Ibid.*, Records of Plenary Meetings, I, p. 59.

³ *Ibid.*, Conference Documents, I, p. 144.

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this effort was the prohibition imposed upon Germany to possess, import, or manufacture such weapons. The British Government renewed the proposal for the abolition of submarines at the Washington Conference, but it met with the opposition of other delegations. Nevertheless, the British Government did not abandon its proposal. British naval representatives on the Permanent Advisory Commission for Military, Naval, and Air Matters raised the issue with similar results. At the Geneva Naval Conference the British Government had again expressed its belief in the abolition of submarines although it had not pressed the matter. As a result of the declaration of Secretary of State Kellogg that the United States was ready to conclude a treaty abolishing the submarine, the British Government again broached the subject in its invitation to the London Conference and in the Conference itself. The principle of abolition could not be agreed upon, and the British proposal was dropped only to be renewed at the next possible occasion in the World Disarmament Conference. In the general debate the British delegation was not the only advocate of the abolition of the submarine. Besides the United States, six countries supported this proposal—China, Germany, Italy, India, New Zealand, and Australia. China and Italy, however, advocated the abolition of capital ships simultaneously with that of the submarine.

In insisting on this point the British Government was impelled by the desire to abolish a weapon which has been most effectively used only against merchantmen in a manner contrary to international law. As a torpedo carrier aimed to defeat the capital ship the submarine has proved a failure. Although sustained submarine attack or a chance shot might disable a modern battleship, the use of destroyer screens and the modern protection of the capital ship have reduced the submarine to the rank of a mere torpedo carrier. In this capacity its disadvantages more than offset its advantages. Since merchantmen in time of war may be armed with 6-inch guns, the submarine cannot be used effectively for a *guerre de course* unless it takes full advantage of its subaqueous possibilities. If it comes to the surface it is likely to be sunk. If

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it remains submerged it cannot, before sinking the ship, save the ship's papers or place the crew in safety. But even if the ship is surrendered without fighting, the submarine can carry no prize crew to place on board the captured vessel and bring it to port for adjudication. The difficulties inherent in the use of submarines according to accepted principles of law are so great that the British Government has been impelled, since the war, to demand the abolition of this weapon. Failing abolition, the Washington Conference had agreed on a declaration in which the High Contracting Parties renounced the use of the submarine as a commerce destroyer. The opposition of France to this convention led to a very diluted declaration at the London Naval Conference which was incorporated in Part IV of the Treaty.¹

The first category of warships which is usually considered in disarmament discussions is that of the capital ship. As defined in the Washington Treaty, capital ships are war vessels exceeding 10,000 tons individual standard displacement or carrying a gun exceeding 8-inch in calibre. Their maximum size was limited to 35,000 tons and their maximum gunnage to 16-inch calibre. Their effective life was placed at twenty years. In the Memorandum of February 7, 1930, on its position at the London Conference, the British Government stated that the Admiralty favoured reducing the size of capital ships to 25,000 tons and the maximum calibre of guns to 12-inch, and lengthening the age from twenty years to twenty-six years.² The Japanese, French, and Italian delegations had supported the British proposals for qualitative limitations of tonnage and gunnage of capital ships presented at the London Conference. The American delegation had opposed them because it favoured big ships capable of operating far from their bases. In the negotiations for a Franco-Italian Agreement

¹ It is interesting to note, in this connection, that Admiral Castex, whose study of submarine warfare in the *Revue Maritime* of January 1920 had led to such an unfortunate diplomatic incident between the British and French Governments at the Washington Conference, has published a study of naval strategy in which he comes to the conclusion that submarines have merely added to the complexity of naval warfare without changing its character and that command of the seas will always be exercised on the surface of the seas (Admiral Castex, *Théories Stratégiques*, I, pp. 302-347).

² Cmd. 3485 of 1930.

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on naval armaments, the British Government had assured the French Government that it would press for the adoption of 12-inch guns as the maximum calibre of guns for capital ships and substantial reduction in the maximum size of such ships. It renewed this stand at the World Disarmament Conference, where many delegations presented plans for the qualitative limitation of capital ships. Japan demanded reduction in size and gunnage, while the other delegations which spoke on the subject advocated reduction to 10,000 tons with 12-inch, 11-inch, or 8-inch guns as the case might be. In its memorandum of July 7, 1932, the British delegation advocated 22,000 tons capital ships with 11-inch guns provided cruisers were limited to 7,000 tons with 6·1-inch guns.¹

The tendency towards decrease in the size of capital ships had made itself evident since the Washington Conference had fixed a maximum size for these ships. With the development in aerial technique of bombing and torpedo launching, there was a general movement of technical opinion away from the big ship in favour of a small ship which would offer a smaller target for air attack. Increase in speed and decrease in size of capital ships became the panacea offered by naval experts for the dangers of aerial attack. Various estimates were made as to the smallest size to which capital ships could be reduced and still fulfil their functions.² Out of these discussions it became clear that it was technically possible to reduce the size of a capital ship by merely reducing the calibre of its guns, still keeping the same speed, number of guns and defence features. Sir William Berry, late Director of Naval Construction for the Admiralty, wrote:

¹ On November 22, 1932, the First Lord of the Admiralty stated that the policy of the Government was to cut the battleship to 22,000 tons, to cut out all 10,000-ton 8-inch cruisers in favour of 7,000-ton 6-inch cruisers, and to abolish submarines, thereby permitting limitation of destroyers (272 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 882-891).

² Cf. Arnold-Forster, Rear-Admiral D., "The Naval Conference," *Fortnightly Review*, 128, pp. 289-298; Bacon, Admiral Sir R., "The Future Needs of the Navy," *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 91, p. 15; Bridge, Sir C., "The Naval Situation," *Edinburgh Review*, 233, pp. 238-254; Richmond, Sir H. W., "Immediate Problems of Naval Reduction," *Foreign Affairs* (N.Y.), 9, pp. 371-388; — — —, *Economy and Naval Security*; Castex, Admiral, *Théories Stratégiques*, I, pp. 302-347.

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"If the calibre were reduced to 14 inches, it would be possible to prepare a satisfactory design in which the same number of guns, and speed of ship would be retained, and in which the standard displacement might be kept some five or six thousand tons less than the present limit; while if the 12-inch gun were reverted to the possible reduction might be expected to become much greater."¹

The building of the *Deutschland* and new developments in metals and explosives concentrated attention on qualitative improvements in material. The trend of technical opinion was summed up by Sir George Thurston in 1933:

"The present tendency appears to lie in the general direction of reducing the calibre but increasing the firing velocity of the guns, also increasing the weight of armour piercing shells and bursting charges, so that taking everything into consideration it would seem that guns of 11-inch or 12-inch calibre will eventually be adopted by all the principal navies. It necessarily follows that naval battles can be fought at a useful maximum range of from 30,000 to 35,000 yards, where the destructive powers of artillery, whilst still effective, will be much reduced, and where a moderate side and barbette armour-thickness coupled with reasonable horizontal protection should suffice for defence."²

Basing his estimate on present-day types and tendencies, Sir George Thurston suggested the following dimensions for the future capital ship:

Length	..	..	..	..	..	..	560 ft. 0 in.
Breadth	..	..	..	..	..	..	92 ft. 0 in.
Mean draft	..	..	..	..	..	..	29 ft. 6 in.
Displacement (in tons)			..	..	..	..	25,000
Horse-power	..	..	..	..	..	..	30,000
Speed at sea	..	..	..	..	..	..	22 knots
Armament	..	..	..	..	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="font-size: 4em; margin-right: 10px;">{</div> <div> 12 12-in. guns 12 6-in. guns 8 4·7-in. A.A. guns 2 21-in. or 24-in. T.T. 1 seaplane³ </div> </div>		

¹ "Capital Ships and Cruisers," *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*, 1931, p. 108.

² "The Capital Ship of the Future," *ibid.*, 1933, p. 91.

³ *Ibid.*, 1933, pp. 93-94.

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Though advocating reduction from 35,000 to 25,000 tons, the policy of the Admiralty disapproved of reducing the maximum size of capital ships to as low as 10,000 tons. It remained convinced that capital ships were the backbone of the British Fleet. In the debates on the Navy Estimates on March 12, 1934, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Bolton Eyres Monsell, explained what the Admiralty considered to be the qualifications of a battleship:

“The first is that a battleship should be powerful enough to remain afloat for a reasonable time against any form of attack—from gunfire, from torpedoes, from mines, and from aerial bombs; and it would be technically impossible to incorporate the necessary protection against all these forms of attack in a ship of 10,000 tons. But there is an overriding consideration, and that is that a battleship should be overwhelmingly more powerful than the next type of ship with which it is likely to come in contact.”

“If the capital ship were reduced to 10,000 tons, or if the gap between the capital ship and the cruiser were unduly reduced, all the smaller Naval Powers which at present have not any ships bigger than cruisers would immediately be in position to upset all the carefully calculated ratios and relative strengths of the other Powers, either by forming combinations among themselves or by re-enforcing one of the larger Powers; and it is only our possession of capital ships overwhelmingly more powerful than cruisers that enables us to accept so low a strength as is represented by a One-Power Standard.”¹

On this point the position of the British Government was quite clear. The British Navy had to remain supreme in European waters if it were to accomplish its purpose. The exercise of command over European waters and the route to India were the *raison d'être* of the British Navy. The exercise of this command was considered essential to British defence. In all disarmament discussions carried on after the war, the British Government bore in mind these considerations and consistently advocated the methods of limiting naval armaments which left unchallenged British command of the European seas. It just as consistently opposed the introduction of the methods of disarmament which would lead to uncertainty and permit a sudden challenge of

¹ 287 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 50–51.

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British command. The reduction of the maximum tonnage of capital ships to 10,000 tons would permit many countries with negligible fleets to increase the importance of their navies by building these new capital ships, the cost of which was no longer prohibitive. In this case either the British Government would have to build a very large number of the new capital ships, creating a net increase in its navy rather than a reduction, or else it would have to resign itself to a situation of insecurity and uncertainty as its neighbours challenged its command of the seas. From this point of view, therefore, reduction in the size of capital ships would either increase British armaments or engender a strong feeling of insecurity. This explained the position taken by Admiral Pound in the Naval Commission that capital ships were defensive weapons.

Except with regard to capital ships the British delegation was the only one to propose the reduction of "the size of men-of-war and the maximum calibre of guns carried by them." Other delegations had concentrated on qualitative disarmament in the sense of the abolition of certain weapons or categories of ships. Capital ships, aircraft carriers, and submarines were in turn stigmatized offensive weapons which must be abolished. The principle underlying such abolition, qualitative reduction, formed the subject of debate of the General Commission which on April 22nd, adopted an amended British resolution declaring:

"... its approval of the principle of qualitative disarmament—*i.e.* the selection of certain classes or description of weapons the possession or use of which should be absolutely prohibited to all States or internationalized by means of a general Convention.¹

On the same day the General Commission agreed to refer to the Naval Commission the examination of naval armaments "with a view to selecting those weapons whose character is the most specially offensive or those most efficacious against national defence or most threatening to civilians."²

¹ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Minutes of the General Commission, I, p. 113.

² *Ibid.*, Minutes of the General Commission, I, p. 116.

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General Tasker H. Bliss, Chief of Staff of the American Army and Military Representative on the Supreme War Council, considered the question of qualitative disarmament in an article in *Foreign Affairs* of April 1926. He wrote:

“It may be suggested that a Conference make a distinction between offensive and purely defensive parts of national armaments. If it should attempt to do this, it would probably find that a fortification without its armament is about the only purely defensive element.”¹

This prophecy was fulfilled in the debates of the naval commission and in the report which it sent to the General Commission on May 28, 1932. The countries with capital ships found that these ships were not particularly offensive and were required for defence. Those which had none claimed, on the other hand, that they were offensive weapons coming under the category of arms to be abolished under the resolution of the General Commission. The same was true inversely with submarines. With the exception of Japan the countries with large capital ships proposed the abolition of the submarine as an inhuman weapon while the countries with small navies insisted on its purely defensive character. It was the same with aircraft carriers. The countries which felt that a certain arm could be used effectively against them urged the abolition of that arm. The Naval Commission finally adopted a resolution² which changed the aspect

¹ “What is Disarmament?” *Foreign Affairs* (N.Y.), 4, p. 365.

² “The Naval Commission having found that nearly all naval weapons possess to some extent both an offensive and defensive character at the same time;

“Being convinced that it is very difficult, if not impossible, from a purely technical point of view, to define the criteria of these arms so far as their mainly offensive or defensive character is concerned, since this character even varies according to the circumstances of the different countries;

“Has come to the conclusion that it can most usefully answer the questions put by the General Commission in giving them the following interpretation:

“Supposing one State either (a) adopts a policy of armed aggression, or (b) undertakes offensive operations against another State, what are the weapons which, by reason of their specific character, and without prejudice to their defensive purposes, are most likely to enable that policy or those operations to be brought rapidly to a successful conclusion?”

(*Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Conference Documents, I, p. 217).

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of the problem of qualitative disarmament. The difference between offensive and defensive weapons was made one of strategic use rather than inherent quality. But even then the delegations could not agree that the use of either battleships, aircraft carriers, or submarines would give the aggressor sufficient initial strategical advantage to produce rapid decisive results.

Private negotiations had been taking place in the margin of the Conference between the delegations of the largest Powers. Conversations between the French and Italian Governments on the limitation of naval armaments were renewed in February under the aegis of the British delegation. No immediate success was attained, and conversations had to be postponed due to the French elections. After that the German elections and the thorny problem of reparations being considered at Lausanne detracted from all serious negotiation. During this time the reports of the various technical commissions were circulated. The delegates had arrived at a state of *non possumus*, which called for immediate action to save the Conference. This immediate stimulus was provided by President Hoover in a declaration which he made in the United States on June 22, 1932. In this declaration, which was presented on the same day to the General Commission by Mr. Gibson, President Hoover made definite proposals for the limitation of land, naval, and air armaments. A large part of the declaration related to the limitation of naval armaments. President Hoover proposed

“that the treaty number and tonnage of battleships shall be reduced by one-third; that the treaty tonnage of aircraft-carriers, cruisers and destroyers shall be reduced by one-fourth; that the treaty tonnage of submarines shall be reduced by one-third and that no nation shall retain a submarine tonnage greater than 35,000 tons.

“The relative strength of naval arms in battleships and aircraft-carriers as between the five leading naval Powers was fixed by the Treaty of Washington.

“The relative strength in cruisers, destroyers, and submarines was fixed as between the United States, Great Britain and Japan by the Treaty of London. For the purpose of this proposal it is suggested that the French and Italian strength in cruisers and destroyers be

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calculated as though they had joined in the Treaty of London on a basis approximating the so-called accord of March 1st, 1931."¹

In presenting these proposals, Mr. Gibson explained that the cruiser strength on the basis of which the 25 per cent reduction was to be computed was that allowed to Great Britain under the London Naval Treaty, namely 339,000 tons. The total tonnage for 8-inch cruisers would be limited under the Hoover proposals to 150,000 tons each for the United States and Great Britain and to 90,000 tons for Japan. Regarding submarines, no nation, whether a party to existing treaties or not, would retain over 35,000 tons of submarines or more than fifty units of which no single vessel could exceed 1,200 tons. Sir John Simon, after making preliminary observations on the contribution of the Hoover proposals to the work of the Conference, made serious reservations on the particular proposals presented because they were not, "in some respects, adequate and in other respects appropriate to the varying circumstances of the different naval Powers." The British delegation "desired a larger measure of disarmament than that outlined in the United States proposal." This greater measure of disarmament could be accomplished by the total abolition of submarines. Failing this, however, the British Government desired most earnestly that the submarine should be limited in size to something like 250 tons. It also believed that more disarmament would be achieved through the limitation of maximum displacement tonnage and gunnage of capital ships to 25,000 tons and to 12-inch guns. This proposal was part of the established policy of the British Government, and, as Sir John Simon said, "would be a first step towards the scaling down of the size of all classes of ships which the United Kingdom delegation most earnestly desired to promote."²

Once more the American thesis and the British policy came into conflict. The Americans again presented their view that the need for armaments was relative and that proportionate reductions

¹ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Conference Documents, I, p. 260.

² *Ibid.*, Minutes of the General Commission, I, pp. 125-126.

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would leave the same security. Their interest in large ships made them confine their proposals to quantitative reductions of naval armaments with the exception of submarines which they would gladly have abolished. British policy was equally clear. The position of the Empire with its long lines of communication necessitated a minimum number of ships below which the British Government could not go. The relative element of competition entered into the computation of British requirements only with regard to the size of the ships required. To achieve a reduction of the total tonnage of the minimum number of ships required, therefore, the British Government was prepared to reduce to strict qualitative limits the tonnage and gunnage of each class of ships. This policy, followed consistently since the war, was presented once more in the memorandum stating the views of His Majesty's Government regarding the proposals contained in President Hoover's declaration.

This memorandum, read simultaneously in the House of Commons by the Lord President of the Council and in the General Commission at Geneva by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, recalled the quantitative reductions already effected in the British Navy and stated that, although a limit to numerical reduction had been reached, there was still possible a reduction in naval armaments. "The present treaty limits of size and gun calibre are far too high, and the United Kingdom Government consider that very large reductions amounting to about one-third, both in the case of capital ships and cruisers, can be made in future construction."¹ It therefore put forward for immediate adoption the following proposals to apply to all navies of the world:

- "(1) Reduce the maximum size of any future capital ship to 22,000 tons, and the maximum calibre of the guns carried to 11 inches.
- "(2) Reduce the maximum size of cruisers hereafter constructed to 7,000 tons, and maximum calibre of guns to 6·1 inches.

¹ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Conference Documents, I, p. 266.

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- “(3) If international agreement on point (2) cannot be secured, the Government of the United Kingdom would still urge that the maximum size of capital ships should be reduced to 25,000 tons and their guns to 12 inches as a maximum.
- “(4) Reduce the maxima for aircraft-carriers to 22,000 tons with 6·1-inch guns.
- “(5) Abolish submarines.
- “(6) Reduce destroyer tonnage by approximately one-third, this depending on the abolition of submarines.
- “(7) If submarines cannot be completely abolished, fix their maximum surface displacement at 250 tons, with a strict limitation both of total tonnage and number of units.”¹

There was no discussion of the Hoover Declaration until July 7th, but even then there was little attention given to the naval propositions. The problem of naval armaments interested particularly the five large Naval Powers and any proposition they would agree to could easily be arranged to meet the need of the small navies. In the resolution adopted on July 22nd by the General Commission to summarize the work done by the Conference since its opening, and to plan for the second phase, no mention was made of any agreement on naval armaments. This problem was merely referred to the Naval Powers for consultation.

“As regards the proposals made by President Hoover and other related proposals concerning naval armaments, the Conference invites the Powers parties to the Naval Treaties of Washington and London, which have already produced important results, to confer together and to report to the General Commission, if possible before the resumption of its work, as to the further measures of naval reduction which might be feasible as a part of the general programme of disarmament.

“The Conference further invites the naval Powers other than the Powers parties to the above mentioned Treaties to make arrangements for determining the degree of naval limitation they are prepared to accept in view of the Washington and London Treaties and the general programme of disarmament envisaged in the present resolution.”²

¹ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Conference Documents, I, p. 267; 268 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 624-629.

² *Ibid.*, Minutes of the General Commission, I, p. 155.

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The Conference adjourned its first part on July 23, 1932, with no concrete result having been achieved in naval disarmament. The Conference had been confronted with the opposed theses of the American and British Governments, and in the face of this disagreement and the failure of the Franco-Italian controversies, the only course left open was further negotiation.

These negotiations took place and the five Naval Powers conferred on the outstanding difficulties.¹ The existing political situation, however, rendered agreement wellnigh impossible. The British Government was faced with complex political problems which affected both the world situation and the European situation of the British Navy. Of prime importance and, as yet, of incalculable influence on the world situation of the British Navy was the Sino-Japanese Dispute.² The naval agreements of Washington and London had been based on the political transactions at Washington. The reduction and limitation of naval armaments had been an essential part of these transactions, which fixed an equilibrium which was to render war between the signatories less likely. This equilibrium had the effect of making each Power supreme in its own waters and thus freeing it from the pressure of the other Powers in deciding its actions within this sphere. A self-evident condition of this agreement was that each Power would do nothing in its sphere of influence which could be considered prejudicial to the vital interests of the other two Powers. This self-evident principle was at the base of the Nine-Power Treaty, which was negotiated "to adopt a policy designed to stabilize conditions in the Far East."

Taking advantage of the political equilibrium which prevented any effective intervention on the part of Great Britain or the United States, the Japanese Government created a situation in Manchuria and Mongolia which completely upset the *status quo* arrangements of Washington. The political settlement of which the limitations of naval armaments adopted at Washington and

¹ 273 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 904-905.

² For a complete story of the dispute *vide* Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs*, 1932, pp. 409-586; Wheeler-Bennett, *Documents on International Affairs*, 1932, pp. 240-398.

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London were a part had been repudiated. There was, therefore, no longer a basis for the limitations imposed on the various navies. The negotiation of further reductions in the navies of the British Commonwealth of Nations, the United States, and Japan would inevitably involve consideration of the political situation in the Far East. As the possibilities were slight of such a settlement being effected under the existing conditions, there was no hope for further reduction of naval armaments at the World Disarmament Conference. The British Draft Convention of March 8, 1933, reflected this state of affairs by proposing that revision of the London Treaty be postponed until the naval conference to be held in 1935, and that, until then, the other Powers should limit their naval armaments on the basis of the existing agreements.

The Sino-Japanese Dispute had repercussions on the European situation.¹ The political foundation of any limitation of armaments in Europe had been the guarantee of the League of Nations. Article 8 of the Covenant was considered by the French Government as the only basis for the reduction and limitation of armaments. When the Covenant of the League of Nations had been drafted reduction and limitation of armaments had been made a part of the political equilibrium of the League system. After years of study of the technical problems involved the disarmament negotiations foreseen in Article 8 were only now taking place. The measure of disarmament which could be secured depended upon the measure of security afforded by the League of Nations. The defiance of League action by Japan and her subsequent withdrawal from League membership aroused scepticism as to the effectiveness of the security provisions of the Covenant. Additional guarantees of security were demanded, and there was no

¹ The influence of the Manchurian conflict upon the problem of disarmament was plainly brought out in a speech of Mr. Atlee, speaking for the Labour Party in the House of Commons on November 10, 1932. "Thirdly, and most important of all, I say that the handling of this question [Manchurian affair] is vital to disarmament. I do not believe that if we fail over Manchuria we shall get France to go in whole-heartedly for disarmament. I do not believe you will get Germany to reject all idea of rearmament. I do not believe that you will get Japan to give up her Imperialist desire" (270 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 529).

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likelihood of achieving any disarmament agreement to which France would be a party without serious guarantees of assistance in the event of unprovoked aggression. At the London Conference the British Government had been unwilling to give additional guarantees, and had hoped that substantial agreement would result from negotiations to bring about a general disarmament convention. Under existing conditions the commitments of the Covenant seemed no longer sufficient and the British Government, in order to remedy this to some extent, proposed a European Pact in which the Powers renounced the use of force in their relations with one another.

The European situation was further complicated by the demand of the German Government for equality of rights in armaments—*Gleichberechtigung*. This demand, which it had made since the beginning of the work of the Preparatory Commission, called for the reduction of the armaments of the other Powers to the level and by the methods imposed upon the Germans by the Treaty of Versailles. Upon the failure of the other Powers to consider its demand the German Government announced on July 22, 1932, that it would no longer participate in the work of the Conference unless the private negotiations provided for, under the resolution of the same day, resulted in recognition of the principle of equality and in the practical application of this principle. The German position evoked sympathetic response in Great Britain, for the British Government had always been favourable to the arguments of the German Government that the existing obligations of the Members of the League called for the reduction of their armaments.

Since the war the British Government had opposed the creation of a permanent inequality of status between Germany and the former Allies. In the Peace Conference Great Britain had suggested that the disarmament imposed upon Germany should last only until the fulfilment of the terms of peace.¹ On March 17, 1919, during the discussion in the War Council on control of the military clauses of the Treaty, Lloyd George had objected to

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 63; *infra*, p. 264.

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special obligations being imposed on Germany. He favoured the introduction in the Covenant of a general obligation for each signatory to declare the state of its armaments, because this would create a reciprocal obligation extending to all nations and holding, therefore, no special humiliation for any of them. If it should be agreed among Englishmen, Frenchmen, Americans, Italians, Japanese, and all those which should enter in this League to inform each other reciprocally of their manufacture of armaments, the Germans would not be able in thirty or forty years to complain of an exceptional treatment which would constantly gall their self-respect. It would be a situation of equality implying no insult or unduly prolonged suspicion.¹ In his memorandum of March 26, 1919, to M. Clemenceau, Lloyd George had asked for the admission of Germany into the League of Nations.² This policy was later reiterated.³ On June 23, 1924, Prime Minister MacDonald stated:

"The Preamble to Part V of the Treaty of Versailles implies, as my Hon. Friend affirms, that the disarmament of Germany is to be a preliminary step to a general limitation of the armaments of all nations. His Majesty's Government have always associated the two things."⁴

This statement and recognition that nations had to disarm to fulfil their international obligations were repeated by Mr. MacDonald in his speech of June 29, 1931.⁵

The policy of the British Government regarding German claims for equality was explained in the House of Commons by Sir John Simon on November 10, 1932. The Government favoured giving equality to Germany if she would join other nations in a declaration that she would not in the future attempt

¹ Meeting of the Council of Ten, March 17, 1919. ² Cmd. 2169 of 1924.

³ 155 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1639; 157 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 984. The spirit of the British Government toward Germany is shown in the statement of Lord Curzon to the Imperial Cabinet on June 22, 1921. "But we are the kind of people who, although fierce in conflict are not lasting in resentment or bitter in revenge, and when the war was over, more particularly when our signatures had been placed to the Peace Treaty and we had a German Ambassador back in London, I believe there was not one of us who was not quite content, to the best of his ability, to wipe out the past, to start again on a new basis, and gradually to build up relations which in time may be those of friendship in the future" (quoted in Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon*, III, p. 226).

⁴ 175 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 16.

⁵ 254 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 914-916.

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to resolve differences by resorting to force. The limitation on German armaments should be contained in the same disarmament convention as those of the other Powers and the convention should be revised alike for all signatories. The Government conceded that the principle should be recognized that Germany had a right to equality in war material without this recognition being a cause for rearmament. Equality had to be achieved in steps. On one thing the Government insisted, that Germany should take part in the negotiations for the practical application of these principles.¹

This policy was incorporated in a statement made in the General Commission by Sir John Simon on November 17th. In this statement Sir John took advantage of the fact that the application of the principle of equality accorded with British policy on naval armaments to present again the British proposals. He stated that

“His Majesty’s Government are at present engaged in seeking agreement with the leading Naval Powers for substantial reduction in the size of guns and tonnage of capital ships, and of the whole naval tonnage, and the principle of according to Germany equality of rights demands that Germany should be permitted to build ships of a type similar to that upon which the great Naval Powers shall finally agree. . . . The principle, however, that the reorganization of Germany’s fighting forces must be carried out in such a way as not to conflict with the limitation and reduction of armaments requires that any construction undertaken by Germany shall, subject to minor adjustments, not increase the total tonnage in any category to which her Navy is at present restricted.”

The latter provision insured against a quantitative building competition and maintained the German Navy in a subordinate position. Sir John, moreover, called attention to the proposals of the British Government to limit cruisers to 7,000 tons with 6-inch guns, a limit closely approximating that of 6,000 tons with 6-inch guns imposed on Germany. With regard to submarines, the British Government had always urged that they should be abolished: such action would establish equality with Germany.²

¹ 270 *H.C. Debts.*, 5 s., cols. 534–538.

² Cmd. 4189 of 1932.

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The private negotiations which had taken place between the French and German Governments to reach some basis of agreement which would enable Germany to return to Geneva led the French Government to present a new plan to the Conference. The first French plan had been laid before the Conference on February 5, 1932, and had concerned itself almost solely with the organization of security. It had proposed, for example, that those nations only should be allowed to retain battleships and submarines over x tons which undertook to place them at the disposal of the League of Nations in case of emergency. The new plan was presented on November 14, 1932, in an attempt to meet German demands for equality of rights. It still maintained the French emphasis on security, subordinating application of the principle of equality of rights to security agreements.

It drew attention to the possibility of reducing naval armaments opened up by such security arrangements as that proposed to Italy before the London Conference and rejected by the British Government.

“But the conclusion at the Washington Conference of the Pacific Agreement, which made possible the signature of the Naval Treaty of 1922, has clearly shown the advantage of *regional* understandings of a political character for the purpose of facilitating the reduction of fighting fleets. If such was the effect of an agreement whose scope was limited to certain restrictions on the use of naval bases and a simple understanding on the part of the signatories to consult one another, it is reasonable to suppose that very much larger reductions of tonnage would be facilitated by agreements organizing, with all the necessary stipulations of detail, the co-operation of fleets in cases analogous to those contemplated in Section A of Chapter III. This applies in particular to the case of the conclusion of a Mediterranean Pact between the Naval Powers concerned.”

The French plan proposed qualitative reductions of the characteristics of certain types of war vessels and quantitative reduction by uniform percentage of the fleets with a total tonnage exceeding 100,000 tons. This reduction was to apply to the total tonnage “declared in 1931 by the different naval Powers in reply to the

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questionnaire of the Council of the League as to the position of their armaments.”¹

An informal conference between the representatives of the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, and Italy was held at Geneva in the beginning of December to discuss the return of Germany to the Disarmament Conference. The French plan and the British declaration formed the basis of these negotiations. On December 11, 1932, the five Powers agreed to a joint resolution which permitted resumption of the work of the Conference. This resolution was presented to the General Commission at its meeting of December 14, 1932. It read as follows:

“(1) The Governments of the United Kingdom, France and Italy have declared that one of the principles that should guide the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments should be the grant to Germany, and to the other Powers disarmed by Treaty, of equality of rights in a system which would provide security for all nations, and that this principle should find itself embodied in the Convention containing the conclusions of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments.

“This declaration implies that the respective limitations of the armaments of all States should be included in the proposed Disarmament Convention. It is clearly understood that the methods of application of such equality of rights be discussed by the Conference.

“(2) On the basis of this Declaration, Germany has signified its willingness to resume its place at the Disarmament Conference.

“(3) The Governments of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy are ready to join in a solemn reaffirmation to be made by all European States that they will not in any circumstances attempt to resolve any present or future differences between the signatories by resort to force. This shall be done without prejudice to fuller discussions on the question of security.

“(4) The five Governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy declare that they are resolved to co-operate in the Conference with the other States there represented in seeking without delay to work out a Convention which shall effect a substantial reduction and a limitation of armaments with provision for future revision with a view to further reduction.”²

¹ *Ser. L.o.N. Pub.*, 1932, IX, 58.

² *The Times*, December 12, 1932; *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Minutes of the General Commission, II, p. 208.

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The Sino-Japanese Dispute and the problems raised by Germany's demand for equality of rights had so clouded the political horizon that limitation of naval armaments seemed impossible. Yet, in spite of the domestic outlook in Germany and the activities of the League of Nations with regard to the Manchurian question, the General Commission resumed its work on February 2, 1933, with a general discussion of the new French plan, followed by a discussion of the limitation of land effectives. These discussions proved so unfruitful that, early in March, a breakdown in the Conference seemed imminent. Sir John Simon and Mr. MacDonald were sent to Geneva to see if it were possible to avert a collapse. On March 16th Mr. MacDonald presented a Draft Convention to the General Commission to serve as a basis for discussion. This Draft Convention, for the first time, introduced figures. Its purpose was to integrate the details in which the Conference seemed lost and, at the same time, grant German equality through a transitional period.¹ It was unanimously adopted as "a basis for its subsequent discussions" by the General Commission on March 27th.

The naval provisions of this Draft Convention contained both qualitative and quantitative proposals. In the first place the Convention provided that the naval armaments of the parties to the Washington and London Treaties remain subject to the limitations contained in these treaties. France and Italy were to become parties to the London Treaty by agreeing to limitations laid down in the Convention on the basis of the agreement of March 1, 1931. No further tonnage of cruisers with guns larger than 6·1 inch calibre would be laid down by either party. The amount of new construction in cruisers with 6·1-inch guns or less and in destroyers for the period between January 1, 1933, to December 31, 1936, was limited to 34,298 (34,847 metric) tons for France and to 27,173 (27,608 metric) tons for Italy. All new tonnage acquired as a result of the French programme of 1931 and the Italian programme of 1931-1932 and as a result of future programmes was to be devoted to replacement of over-age

¹ 276 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 511-514.

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cruisers and destroyers. No further submarines could be acquired by either party, and France was to arrange her scrapping programme so as to have completed x tons by December 31, 1936.

Besides these limitations, qualitative limitations were imposed upon all parties by the prohibition to build or acquire any capital ship during the period up to December 31, 1936. Italy, however, could lay down one ship not exceeding 26,500 tons with 13-inch guns.¹ There was also a prohibition on all parties to build or acquire submarines exceeding 2,000 tons individual displacement or carrying guns above 5·1-inch calibre. The naval armaments of the parties not signatories to the London or Washington Treaties were to be stabilized by limiting their navies as follows: (a) no cruisers carrying guns larger than 6·1-inch calibre were to be built or acquired; (b) the completed tonnage in cruisers of sub-category B, destroyers, and submarines were not to exceed that shown in an accompanying table; (c) there was to be complete freedom of transfer between cruisers of sub-category B and destroyers. The parties were to accept the rules regarding the use of submarines drafted in London as rules of international law. The Permanent Disarmament Commission was to ascertain the opinions of the parties with a view to a Disarmament Conference which was to be held simultaneously with the Naval Conference of 1935, and which would limit the naval armaments of the Powers not members of the latter Conference.²

The reactions of the various Powers to these proposals were expressed in the discussions on the first reading of the Draft Convention which lasted until June 8th. The American Government had no insuperable objections to the proposals because the existing treaties were maintained in full force. The Japanese Government, however, did not like the proposals. "The Japanese delegation attached the utmost importance to the inclusion of a new naval agreement in the Convention."³ It therefore proposed that all mention of the continued existence of the Washington

¹ These were the limits of the new ship laid down by France.

² *Ser. L.o.N. Pub.*, 1933, IX, 2.

³ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Minutes of the General Commission, II, p. 504.

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and London Treaties be omitted from the Convention. The Japanese Government desired to change the ratios established at Washington and London; it was strongly opposed to a provision which seemed to imply confirmation of the ratios provided in existing treaties. Neither France nor Italy were satisfied with the Draft Convention. The French objected to the prohibition of capital ship construction as abrogating their rights under the London Treaty. They "noted that there was very serious doubt as to the possibility of concluding an agreement of such short duration on the question of construction."¹ The Italian delegation would not accept in a convention anything less than parity with France, and objected that the Draft Convention renewed the inequalities of the "Bases of Agreement" of March 1, 1931, which had prevented acceptance by Italy. The other naval Powers objected to the British Draft Convention because it envisaged a mode of limitation different from that accepted by compromise in the Preparatory Commission. They therefore suggested amendments to the text to bring it into conformity with the model Draft Convention of the Preparatory Commission.²

When the first reading of the British Draft Convention had been completed, on June 8, 1933, the General Commission resolved

"That the Draft Convention submitted by the United Kingdom delegation and accepted as basis of discussion by a formal decision of the General Commission should be accepted as the basis of the future convention. This acceptance would be without prejudice to amendments or proposals submitted before and during the second reading."³

After this the Commission adjourned on June 29th to allow private exchanges of view before the second reading, which was due to begin on October 16, 1933. From September 23rd onwards intensive conversations were carried on in Geneva between the United Kingdom, American, French, German, and Italian delegations to harmonize their views before the second reading

¹ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Minutes of the General Commission, II, p. 504.

² *Cf. Conf. D.*, 163.

³ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Minutes of the General Commission, II, p. 630.

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of the Draft Convention. The Bureau of the Conference met on October 9th and 14th. At the latter meeting Sir John Simon made a statement regarding the conversations of the five Powers. On the same day the President of the Conference received a telegram from the German Minister for Foreign Affairs announcing the withdrawal of Germany from the Conference.¹ In view of this action the meeting of the General Commission was postponed until private negotiations should have made the situation more propitious for resumption of the study of the British Draft Convention.

In the face of this new defection of Germany the policy of the British Government remained the same—to try by all means in its power to bring about some agreement on the reduction and limitation of armaments. This policy, announced in the King's Speech opening Parliament on November 21, 1933,² was reiterated by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in the debates on the question of disarmament which took place in the House of Commons in November 1933. On November 21st Mr. MacDonald said:

"So far as the proverb is true that where there is a will there is a way, the British Government certainly has the will to make the Disarmament Conference succeed, and we shall not lose any opportunity, but we shall make every one we possibly can, to discover that way and walk through it to its successful end."³

On November 24th Sir John Simon also explained the policy of the Government:

"First, the adjournment of the Disarmament Conference does not mean the adjournment of work for disarmament. It means the very opposite. The Government intend that this period of suspension shall be devoted without delay and without intermission to exchanging views between the different Governments in order . . . to prepare the ground on which the Conference can resume its work."⁴

The insistence of the British Government upon some measure

¹ Cmd. 4437 of 1933.

³ *Ibid.*, col. 24.

² 283 *H.C. Deb.*, 5 s., col. 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, cols. 434-435.

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of disarmament was voiced in the memorandum dated January 29, 1934, which it transmitted to the Powers represented at the Conference before sending the Lord Privy Seal on a visit to the various capitals to ascertain the views of France, Germany, and Italy on the problem of disarmament. The United Kingdom Government insisted on the reduction by the armed Powers of certain categories of armaments, and not merely limitation at the *status quo*. It even envisaged the immediate rearmament of Germany if this were necessary to secure agreement.¹ In the discussion of this memorandum in the House of Commons on February 6, 1934, Sir John Simon said:

"In the second place, approaching the whole thing in a spirit of realism we reach . . . the inevitable deduction from two propositions, neither of which can be effectively challenged. The first proposition is that Germany's claim to equality of rights in the matter of armaments cannot be resisted and ought not to be resisted. . . . Secondly, no practical solution can be found on the basis that all nations throughout the world immediately abandon all weapons denied to Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. . . . There is only one possible conclusion, and the conclusion to those two propositions, it appears to me, is that in a new Convention you will have to face some rearmament by Germany. We should recognize that that conclusion does flow from both and proceed without delay to negotiate a treaty on that basis. . . .

"I have to say, on behalf of the British Government, that His Majesty's Government would view, not only with reluctance but with repugnance, a settlement which provided, it might be, for equality of rights, but provided for it without any reduction of armaments in any part of the world. We are bound to resist so melancholy a conclusion with all our might. The object of this Memorandum is to show how it is possible for highly armed Powers progressively to get rid of their heaviest weapons."²

In view of the reception accorded to the naval proposals in its Draft Convention, the British Government did not insist upon their acceptance, but was willing to have the whole problem postponed until the Naval Conference of 1935. There was all the more justification for this because the private negotiations on

¹ *Ser. L.o.N. Pub.*, 1934, IX, 1, pp. 6-17.

² 285 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 991-992.

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the problem had led nowhere. The conflict of opinion between the American and British Governments on qualitative as opposed to quantitative reduction of ships remained unsolved. The negotiations between the French and Italian Governments had likewise brought no agreement. As far as the Japanese were concerned, there was no likelihood of their accepting any convention which seemed to affirm the existing limitations. On December 11, 1932, they had presented to the Conference a plan to naval disarmament in which they suggested an 11-11-8 ratio in capital ships, a 12-12-10 ratio in Class A cruisers, and a uniform maximum tonnage for all five principal Naval Powers in all other vessels.¹ Viscount Ishii, the chief Japanese delegate at the World Economic Conference, informed *The Times* correspondent on May 3, 1933, that Japanese public opinion would not permit the Japanese Government to accept again the 60 per cent naval ratio. On the same day the Japanese Foreign Office spokesman threw out broad hints that in 1935 Japan would ask for equality in naval status with Great Britain and the United States.²

The Naval Conference of 1935

These difficulties were even more apparent in the conversations officially opened on June 18, 1934, to pave the way for the Naval Conference of 1935. These official conversations on the procedure

¹ The Japanese plan of December 11, 1932, proposed both qualitative and quantitative reductions, but it was not discussed in the Conference. It provided that the maximum size and gun calibre of vessels were to be limited to the following figures: capital ships, 25,000 tons with 14-inch guns; A Class cruisers, 8,000 tons with 8-inch guns; B Class cruisers, 6,000 tons with 6·1-inch guns; destroyers, including flotilla leaders, 1,500 tons with 5·1-inch guns; submarines, 1,800 tons with 5·1-inch guns. Aircraft carriers were to be abolished. The total tonnage allowed in each class was: (a) capital ships, 275,000 tons for the United States and the British Empire and 200,000 tons for Japan, giving 11, 11, and 8 units each—France and Italy could have 150,000 tons each without any fixed number of units; A Class cruisers, 96,000 tons or 12 units for the United States and the British Empire, 80,000 tons or 10 units for Japan, and 56,000 tons or 7 units for France and Italy; (c) B Class cruisers, destroyers, and submarines, 150,000 tons, 150,000 tons, and 75,000 tons respectively for all five Powers (*Ser. L.o.N. Pub.*, 1932, IX, 62).

² *The Times*, May 4, 1933.

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for the forthcoming naval conference were adjourned on July 16th. They were resumed on October 23rd and definitely adjourned on December 20th until prospects of agreement were brighter. The British Government was left the task of calling together the delegates when private negotiations have made this propitious. The conversations revealed the wellnigh insuperable difficulties in the way of further limitation of naval armaments. They made clear the complete disagreement between Great Britain and the United States on the size and number of ships to be built. Great Britain insisted that the political situation of the world and the naval situation in Europe were such as to make necessary a large increase in her fleet. Reconstruction of the battle fleet was necessary to maintain her naval supremacy in her own waters and the number of cruisers and anti-submarine craft had to be seriously increased to meet the threat offered by the other European naval Powers. To prevent too large an increase in tonnage and cost, the British Government pressed for strict limitations of tonnage and gunnage of each class of ships. The United States, estimating her naval needs in terms of action in the Pacific, insisted on the maintenance of large units. This position was strengthened by Italy's announcement, on June 10, 1934, of the future construction of two 35,000-ton battleships.¹ The Anglo-American disagreement is fundamental because, although the British Government, in estimating its naval needs, does not consider the quantity of ships built by the United States it does take into consideration the quality of ships built by her. It appears possible, however, from the conversations that a compromise may be found along the lines of the one adopted in 1930 at the London Naval Conference. The recent changes in American policy toward the freedom of the seas and their traditional views of neutral rights has so altered the situation that possibility of conflict between the United States and Great Britain seems remote and the British Government may allow the Americans to build bigger ships while it builds small ones

¹ It was later announced that the battleships would be laid down on October 28, 1934 (*The Times*, October 20, 1934).

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in an agreement which maintains each Power supreme in its own waters.

The problem of disarmament at the Naval Conference of 1935 is further complicated by the Japanese claims for a larger navy. The political basis of the existing limitations imposed upon the navies of the United States, Great Britain, and Japan has been destroyed, and the Japanese Government has declined to discuss political questions in the pre-Conference negotiations. There is no prospect of agreement on the limitation of the naval armaments of the three large naval Powers without the restoration of a balance of power in the Pacific. This restoration will be extremely difficult because the Japanese have not only shown their unwillingness to respect the vital interests of other countries within their sphere of influence, but have claimed to extend that sphere to the whole of China in violation of existing international obligations.¹ Although impregnable in its own waters under the ratio of naval strength fixed at Washington, the Japanese Government has insisted upon increasing its naval forces in proportion to those either of Great Britain or the United States. On December 29, 1934, it denounced the Washington Treaty, and thereby resumed freedom of building after December 31, 1936.

The Japanese Government is reported as favouring a reduction in total tonnage and the maximum individual tonnage of each ship, abolition of the principle of ratios and adoption of the principle of global tonnage limitation, the right of each nation to determine its own defensive needs, and adoption of the principle of equality of rights in armaments.² Since the independence from foreign pressure secured to Japan by the Washington Agreements has prevented effective opposition to her actions in Manchuria, it is hardly likely that the large naval Powers will agree to change the naval ratio, thereby allowing the Japanese Government even greater freedom of action. For Great Britain and the United States to recognize the right of Japan to a larger

¹ Cf. Declaration of the Foreign Office Spokesman, April 18, 1934. *The Times*, April 19, 1934.

² *The Times*, June 18, 1934.

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ratio of strength in proportion to the American or British Navies would be tantamount to giving the Japanese Government *carte blanche* to carry out its designs in the Far East. This renders bargaining all but impossible. If British and American public opinion insist upon further limitation of naval armaments, and if the Anglo-American differences can be composed, a convention will be arrived at only on the basis of the explicit or implicit recognition of the freedom of Japan to do as she pleases in the Far East.¹

Even if a solution of this problem is found at the Naval Conference of 1935 and a new balance of power in the Pacific is struck, the British Government will be unable to accept any reduction or limitation of its naval armaments without a previous solution to the European problem. The Franco-Italian naval discord still persists, although the recent agreements raise the hope that it will be amicably composed.² To this is added the demand of Germany for equality of rights which may lead to naval rearmament. Any limitation of naval armaments involving either France, Italy, or Germany will have to be a part of a larger settlement on the reduction of all armaments of the three States and other European States. This complete accord cannot be achieved except as an integral part of a political settlement establishing a balance of power in Europe. The difficulties in the way of establishing such a political equilibrium are almost insuperable. The Conference of 1935 for the reduction and limitation of naval armaments will be held under extremely inauspicious circumstances.

The solution to these difficulties appears to lie in stronger superstate organization. The British Government, if it hopes to obtain a limitation and reduction of naval armaments in 1935, will be faced with the necessity of agreeing to more definite and automatic commitments than it has heretofore been willing to

¹ Cf. Pratt, Admiral W. V., "The Setting for the 1935 Naval Conference," *Foreign Affairs* (N.Y.), 12, pp. 541-552.

² On May 5, 1934, the Italian Government launched a comprehensive naval construction programme of 480,000,000 lire to be spent over a period of five years beginning in 1935 (*The Times*, May 8, 1934).

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assume. The consequences of breaking peace and the provisions of the disarmament convention must be made plain and inevitable. If these automatic and definite commitments be generalized they may serve as a basis for a Far Eastern settlement. Thus, the solution to apparently insoluble political problems may lie, not in the striking of two regional balances of power as has been attempted until now, but in world-wide community of power with more definite commitments and less choice in their application than are contained in the present Covenant of the League of Nations. Without some such solution to the problems facing the Naval Conference of 1935 the history of the reduction and limitation of naval armaments after the war of 1914-1918 will have been written.¹

¹ Mr. W. T. Stone concluded a study of "Impending Naval Rivalry" in *Foreign Policy Reports*, April 1934 (10, pp. 30-40), by writing that "the future naval limitation depends in large measure on the ability of the leading maritime powers to effect a settlement of outstanding political differences at the Conference of 1935. As in 1921, the chief obstacles to a naval accord lie in the conflict of national policies in the Pacific area. The main problems are those created by the Japanese sponsored state of Manchoukuo and the non-recognition policy adopted by the United States and the members of the League of Nations."

CHAPTER IV

BRITISH ATTITUDE ON LAND DISARMAMENT

THE British Army, before the war, was a small voluntary army maintained almost exclusively for service in the Empire, to provide police forces for the colonies and garrisons for strategic centres. In moments of crisis it formed a nucleus around which the territorial forces gathered for the defence of the United Kingdom. Lord Raglan had in mind the functions performed by the British Army when he enumerated the three purposes for which standing armies are necessary to all countries:

“1. To guard against revolution and riot.

“2. To provide instructors for such irregular forces as may be necessary to ensure that invasion, if not impossible, shall be at any rate difficult and dangerous.

“3. To guard places of such strategic and economic importance that their sudden seizure by a hostile force would bring the country to its knees.”¹

The size of the British Army has been governed by the requirements of the internal defence of the Empire and the maintenance of law and order. It is composed of an army abroad with a reserve at home in a system of “linked battalions.” This system, known as the Cardwell System, was instituted by Lord Cardwell in 1868 to cut down the size of the army abroad by providing a larger number of reserves at home. In 1868 there were ninety-four battalions abroad and forty-seven at home. Lord Cardwell established a reserve at home, reduced colonial garrisons, abolished colonial military forces, reduced the period of engagement, and linked the battalions at home with those abroad so that the home battalion might act as reserve for the one established abroad. By 1872 the system had worked so well as to equate the balance, seventy battalions being stationed at home and seventy-one

¹ Lord Raglan, “Armament and Frontiers,” *Nineteenth Century and After*, 92, p. 17.

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abroad, mostly in India. Thus, under the Cardwell System, the size of the British Army at home depends upon the needs for overseas garrisons, principally in India.

After the experience of the Boer War and the sudden expansion in armed force made necessary to carry it on, the Duke of Norfolk's Commission, which investigated the lessons of the South African War, reported that no scheme of Imperial Defence could be complete which did not provide powers of expansion outside the regular forces of the Crown.¹ Pursuant upon this report, Lord Esher's Committee reorganized the Army and equipped the British Expeditionary Force, the first field army fit to embark immediately upon open warfare that had ever been maintained in the United Kingdom in time of peace. Lord Haldane, in a letter to *The Times* dated December 16, 1918, explained that the purpose of the Expeditionary Force had been to furnish a highly trained army which, joined with the French, would offset German superiority. The old Militia were transformed into the territorials who served a few weeks a year and were organized in such a way as to enable rapid expansion in case of war. They were liable to be called up for mobilization only in case of invasion or national danger, and could not be used abroad without their consent.

During the immediate pre-war years the British Army remained a small army maintained to police the Empire, but with its home battalions organized as an Expeditionary Force to act immediately and effectively in case of war with Germany to furnish the extra weight to the French Army which might enable it to stem the German tide and prevent the Channel Ports falling into German hands. Mr. Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for War, explained, during the debates on the Army Estimates on February 10, 1920, the pre-war military policy of Great Britain.

"The size of the British Army before the war was fixed by two considerations; first of all, the number of units necessary to garrison the Empire abroad and the number of units necessary at home to sustain them and keep them in being, together with such force as was

¹ Cf. Maurice, General Sir F., "Reconstruction of the British Army," *Contemporary Review*, 117, pp. 317-328.

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considered indispensable for internal security, out of which a moderate reinforcement was provided for the Empire in case of serious emergency.

"The second consideration was still more arbitrary. The Army was limited by the number of men who could be persuaded to enlist in it under the voluntary system. . . ."

"Of course, it is idle to pretend that the pre-war Army was proportionate to the risks which we had to run or the enemies with whom we came in collision. Nor was it proportionate to the important part in European diplomacy which we played and to which we aspired. The British Army before the war was provided for garrisoning India, for garrisoning our fortresses abroad and our dependencies, and any expeditionary force available for Europe was just made out of the spare parts of that machinery, grouped together in the best manner that could be devised."¹

The British Government was not particularly concerned in the international limitation of land armaments before the war because it already maintained its armed forces on the lowest scale compatible with their duties. It, therefore, did not receive with particular interest the proposals of the Mouravieff circular inviting the Powers to a Peace Conference at The Hague, that military personnel and budgets should be limited on the basis of the *status quo*, that an interdict should be placed on all new weapons and explosives, and that the use of powerful explosives should be limited. The British Government accepted the invitation to the Conference without special reference to this part of the Russian programme. The British Army was considered a small army, perhaps suited to its function as Empire policeman, but hardly to be feared for its offensive capacities in a Continental War. Although limitation of land forces would not have seriously affected the position of the British Army, the reaction of the Army Council was not favourable to the Russian proposals. On May 17, 1899, the War Office sent to the Foreign Office a memorandum on these proposals.

"In conclusion the following summary is submitted of the views which are contained in the Memorandum on the subject of the Russian Circular:

¹ 125 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1341-1344.

British Attitude on Land Disarmament

"Article 1.—It is not desirable that any undertaking should be given restricting the numbers and cost of Her Majesty's military forces.

"Articles 2 and 3.—It is not desirable to agree to any restrictions upon the employment of further developments in destructive agencies, whether in small arms, cannon, or explosives, or the methods of employing them.

"Article 7.—It is not desirable to assent to an international code on the laws and customs of war; but an understanding may be given that Her Majesty's Government will consider the question of issuing instructions on these subjects for the general guidance of British forces."¹

In the First Commission of the Hague Conference of 1899, the British participated in the discussions on the proposals of the Russian Government for the limitation of land armaments and joined the majority in its report. This report expressed regret at the impossibility of arriving "at a positive and immediate agreement upon the subject of effective forces and military budgets, but it adds that it hopes that the Governments themselves will resume the study of the questions."² After drafting a code of laws regulating the conduct of war and adopting, among others, a resolution recognizing the desirability of restricting military charges, the First Hague Conference adjourned. The British position, however, was not the cause of, or even a contributory factor to, the failure of the Conference to limit land armaments. On July 29, 1899, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles ÀCourt reviewed the situation from The Hague:

"Germany is the military centre of gravity of Europe, and all ideas of effecting any reduction, small or great, in the present burden of armaments on land, must inevitably fail if they do not receive support from Berlin. They do not receive such support; on the contrary, they are met with the plain intimation that Germany will, under no circumstances, be a party to any limitation and still less to any reduction of armaments: they consequently fall to the ground."³

Pre-war agitation in England for limitation of armaments and military budgets concentrated itself on the naval arm. The

¹ *British Documents on the Origin of the War*, I, p. 226.

² *Proceedings of the Hague Conferences*, Conference of 1899, pp. 89-90.

³ *British Documents on the Origin of the War*, I, p. 229.

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growing naval competition with Germany and the fear and suspicion it was engendering captured public attention, and the Army was left in the background. The British Expeditionary Force had been trained for service in France against Germany, but because of its small size it did not attract attention and it was neglected in the balancing and counter-balancing of military alliances then influencing European diplomacy—"a contemptible little army" the Kaiser called it. In accepting the invitation to the Second Hague Conference of 1907, the British Government reserved its right to bring up the subject of limitation of armaments and military budgets. It was clear, however, from Sir Edward Fry's speech and the pre-conference negotiations that it was limitation of naval armaments and budgets which interested Great Britain above all else.¹

The British Army in 1914 numbered 168,000, the Army Reserve 147,000, and the Special Reserve 63,000, and there were 76,000 white troops in India.² The total British military strength available on August 4, 1914—Regular Army, Reserve, and Territorial Force—was 733,514. By the end of the war, the total number of men who had been in the army of the British Empire was 8,654,467, of which 5,704,416 were from the British Isles.³ In 1916, the British Government instituted conscription and was thus enabled to call out a total of 6,211,427 men on land, sea, and air during the course of the war.⁴ Great Britain, for the second time in modern history, had become a leading Military Power. This fact, together with the hatred of German militarism and the unpopularity of conscription, focused the attention of the British people on the necessity of limiting land armaments.

The whole of this movement concentrated itself against conscription which was regarded as "the taproot of militarism." On the eve of the general election of the Fall 1918, Lloyd George

¹ *British Documents on the Origin of the War*, VIII, Chap. LXV.

² Earl of Midleton in the House of Lords (*The Times*, June 28, 1923).

³ War Office, *Military Effort of the British Empire*, pp. 740, 756.

⁴ Memorandum of Lloyd George to M. Briand, Cannes, January 4, 1922 (*The Times*, January 12, 1922. Cmd. 2169 of 1924, p. 117).

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voiced this sentiment in a statement of the policy which he followed throughout the Peace Conference. He said:

"I wish to make it clear beyond all doubt that I stand for the abolition of conscript armies in all lands. Without that, as I said at Bristol, the peace conference will be a failure and a sham.

"These great military machines are responsible for the agony the world has passed through, and it would be a poor ending to any peace conference that allowed them to continue."¹

Conscription, however, was only the focal point of the movement for general disarmament of which Lloyd George recognized the necessity in his outline of British war aims. Under the impetus of this movement, the British Government sought to limit the land armaments of all countries by limiting directly their immediate striking force, thereby decreasing the "offensive power" of each nation. The limitation of Germany's armaments was an essential condition preliminary to such disarmament.

The problem of general disarmament at the Peace Conference, therefore, involved, in the first place, the disarmament of Germany and, in the second place, a general reduction in the armaments of all other countries. Mr. Balfour, at a meeting of the Council of Ten on January 21, 1919, laid down clearly the necessity for proceeding immediately with disarmament.

"If the League of Nations is to be practical, the delegates must make up their minds as soon as possible regarding the question of disarmament. It was most important to come to some agreement as to what arms Germany was to be allowed to have. It was evident that a league of nations would be a sham if there is no disarmament."²

Two days after this, in a conversation between the representatives of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers in M. Pichon's room, Quai d'Orsay, Lloyd George presented a resolution calling for a commission to study the two phases of the disarmament

¹ Mr. Hudson to Mr. Bullit, December 18, 1918. Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris*, II, p. 319; 114 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 986; 117 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 760-761; 118 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 668-670. Before the war, however, Mr. Lloyd George advocated conscription in England as "a great safeguard for peace" (Lord Riddell, *More Pages from My Diary*, 1908-1914, pp. 94, 104).

² Quoted in Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, I, p. 351.

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problem. In presenting this resolution, he gave his reasons for so doing:

"Unless the enemy's forces were immediately reduced, the British Government might be forced to maintain compulsory service. He did not know what might be the political result of such a decision. In another month's time, the renewal of the Armistice would be considered. He felt that at that time we should demand a drastic reduction of the armed forces of Germany to a fixed quatum, such as might suffice to maintain internal order. It would be necessary to place a limit on the armaments and munitions available for these forces; the surplus could be placed under Allied guard. . . . He was informed by the British War Office that to fulfil Marshal Foch's requirements, a British Army of 1,700,000 men must be kept with the colours. This was a very serious demand which would not be readily accepted by the country.

"Marshal Foch had forwarded a demand for British troops which it would be extremely difficult for the country to honour. It was for this reason that he had suggested as an alternative to increasing the Allied forces for the reduction of the enemy's troops."¹

Land Disarmament of Germany

When drafting the Armistice to be granted to Germany, provisions for German disarmament had been incorporated in order to preclude her resuming hostilities and to ensure her acceptance of the peace terms.² Moreover, such disarmament permitted the Allies to begin demobilization and ease up on the war strain. The German Armistice came due for a third renewal on February 11, 1919, and reports were presented to the Council of Ten to show how the disarmament provisions of the Armistice had been evaded or not fully carried out. The Allied Ministers feared that Germany would prefer to continue fighting rather than accept the Peace Terms. A military committee was appointed at the Supreme

¹ Miller, *op. cit.*, XIV, pp. 3-4. Lloyd George was even more plain, on February 7th, as to his motives in seeking to disarm Germany. "All he wanted was to get the guns away from the Germans, so that it might not be necessary to maintain huge armies. He did not contemplate making Europe an armed camp forever, and the way to prevent this was to disarm Germany (*ibid.*, XIV, p. 251).

² Cf. Seymour, *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, IV, pp. 110-124; Foch, *Mémoires*, II, pp. 268-320; Mermeix, *Les négociations secrètes et les quatres armistices*.

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Council meeting of January 24, 1919, to draft additional clauses to the Armistice conditions, one of which would provide for the reduction of the German Army to the size to which it would be limited under the Peace Treaties. The report of this committee was presented to the Council of Ten at its meeting of February 7th. Adopting the standard set up in Wilson's Fourteen Points, the report recommended the following article:

"3. Germany undertakes to reduce the effective personnel of her armies to such numbers as are strictly necessary for the garrison of her frontiers and the maintenance of order in the interior, that is to say—

25 Divisions
5 Cavalry Divisions."

After lengthy discussions on German evasions of the Armistice provisions and the desirability of further disarming Germany, the Supreme Council, on February 10, 1919, appointed a commission of military and economic experts to study the means of enforcing upon Germany compliance with the terms of the Armistice. Great Britain was represented on this commission by Lord Robert Cecil and General Thwaites. This committee expressed the opinion "that naval and military terms of peace should be drawn up immediately by a Commission appointed for the purpose, and imposed on the enemy."² The military sub-committee proposed:

"(1) To impose at once upon Germany fixed conditions as regards a military and naval status, comprising—

"(a) The limitation of personnel to a strength of twenty-five infantry divisions . . . five cavalry divisions.

"(b) The limitation of armaments by land, by sea, and in the air, and, consequently, the putting out of action of war material in excess.

"(c) The control of these measures."³

¹ Miller, *op. cit.*, XIV, p. 258. Cf. Slosson, P. W., "Annotations on Part V, Section I, of the Treaty of Versailles," November 22, 1919 (*ibid.*, XIX, pp. 202-217).

² *Ibid.*, XIV, p. 355. Memorandum of the British Foreign Office, reproduced in Seymour, *op. cit.*, IV, pp. 377-389.

³ Miller, *op. cit.*, XIV., p. 353.

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After discussion of this report on February 12th, the Supreme Council decided that the detailed and final naval, military, and air conditions of the preliminaries of peace should be drawn up at once by a committee presided over by Marshal Foch, which conditions when approved by the Supreme War Council should be presented to Germany for signature as the policy of the Associated Governments.¹

The military committee which was expected to report on the disarmament of Germany in two days' time reported only on March 3, 1919. Summarizing the report before the Supreme Council, Foch said that "these regulations provide for the military and aerial statutes of Germany, under the principle that Germany will only keep the forces necessary to ensure order and to police the interior of her territories."² The committee had had to decide on (1) the maximum military and aerial strength, (2) the staffing of this strength, (3) the method of recruiting, (4) armaments, and (5) the controlling measures. These regulations provided for land forces not to exceed 200,000 men and 9,000 officers, a long term voluntary service of twenty-five years for officers and fifteen years for N.C.O.s, and some sort of service for men not to exceed one year's continuous service, and no class to exceed 180,000 men. The British military delegation had urged that long term voluntary service for men was preferable, but had given way to facilitate a decision. Armaments and ammunition were settled according to quantities necessary for an army of 200,000 men taking as basis the armaments of German divisions shortly before the Armistice. Surplus armaments were to be destroyed and a commission of control was to be established for a prescribed period.³

After a preliminary exchange of views, the Supreme Council deferred the problem until March 6th, when the real discussion on the terms took place. Lloyd George refused to accept the possibility of Germany establishing compulsory military service under the terms already drafted. He discussed with Foch the

¹ This decision was later reversed because the rest of the terms of peace were ready almost as soon as the disarmament provisions (Tardieu, *The Truth about the Treaty*, pp. 126-139; Miller, *op. cit.*, XIX, p. 204).

² *Ibid.*, XV, p. 134.

³ *Ibid.*, XV, pp. 134-136.

British Attitude on Land Disarmament

pros and cons of voluntary service, which he thought should be applied to Germany. Foch objected that a voluntary long-service army created cadres which could be rapidly expanded in case of war, thus renewing the strength of the German Army which, before the war, had lain in its large numbers of N.C.O.s.¹ On the next day, Lloyd George presented the following resolution which was adopted:

"The military, naval, and aerial terms of peace with Germany shall be based on the following principles:

- "1. The German naval, military, and air forces shall be raised entirely by voluntary service.
- "2. The minimum period of service for all ranks shall be twelve years with the colours.
- "3. The strength of the German Army and Air Force shall not exceed 200,000 men of all ranks, organized in not more than fifteen divisions and three cavalry divisions.
- "4. The strength of the German Navy shall not exceed 15,000 men of all ranks and ratings."²

On the question of conscription, Lloyd George was adamant. He was formally pledged to secure its abolition in all countries, and public opinion at home would stand for no compromise in the matter. In defending his resolution, Lloyd George presented his case clearly and forcefully. Voluntary service would prevent the training of large reserves. Germany would have cadres and guns, but a "voluntary army was more expensive than a conscript army. If Germany had to maintain a voluntary army in addition to paying compensation to the Allies, there would be no money left for military adventures. The permanent limitation of armaments was an illusion."³ He added that:

"He, on behalf of Great Britain, would never sign any peace giving Germany an army of more than 200,000 men. He would never agree to any army raised in Germany by short conscript service. No General's opinion would shake his decision. This was a matter for Governments to decide."⁴

¹ Miller, *op. cit.*, XV, pp. 179-184.

³ *Ibid.*, XV, pp. 244-246.

² *Ibid.*, XV, p. 244.

⁴ *Ibid.*, XV, p. 246.

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The military terms were sent back to the experts for redrafting to incorporate voluntary service for the whole army.

The redrafted terms were accepted by the Council of Ten at its meeting of March 10th. At the instance of Clemenceau and Foch, however, the number of effectives allowed, 140,000, was decreased to 100,000. In spite of General Bliss's objection that the force was not sufficient for the task assigned, the British and American delegations agreed in view of the fact that the French would be the first to meet the German Army should it be used for aggressive purposes. Mr. Balfour suggested that guarantees against external aggression be given to Germany, but Clemenceau felt that the League of Nations would do that. Later, on May 25th, Lloyd George said that "he personally was disposed to agree with General Bliss's statement that 100,000 men would be an inadequate force for Germany, but he yielded to the French contention."¹ The whole of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles was to come up again for discussion on March 17th. President Wilson said he would challenge the decision imposing voluntary service on Germany on the ground that he was not present when the decision was reached, although both House and Lansing were there. Lloyd George had a private talk with Wilson in which—as Sir Henry Wilson records it—"he made it clear that he would not tolerate this and said that if he persisted he—Lloyd George—who was not present when the League of Nations was agreed to, would challenge that decision. Wilson collapsed."² All the military terms were accepted on March 17th with few changes.

These terms were incorporated in Articles 159 to 180 of the Treaty of Versailles. They contained, in the first place, provisions for the reduction of military effectives with the colours. All

¹ Miller, *op. cit.*, XIX, p. 207. Sir Henry Wilson writes of this in his diary: "So I got my principle but not my numbers, and Foch got his numbers but not his principle. An amazing state of affairs" (Callwell, *Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson*, II, pp. 170-173).

² *Ibid.*, II, p. 174. No corroborative evidence of this conversation has been found, but there is no reason to challenge Sir Henry Wilson's accuracy. This attitude of Wilson may be interpreted as a political move to offset the pressure being put on him at this time by the British for an understanding on naval building.

British Attitude on Land Disarmament

German military effectives, including officers and the establishment of depot, were limited to 100,000 men, divided into seven divisions of infantry and three divisions of cavalry. The total effective strength of officers might not exceed 4,000. The maximum number of officers, N.C.O.s, and men for each regiment was fixed. There could be only two army corps headquarters staffs, and the German General Staff was abolished. To prevent evasion of these strict provisions, the Treaty provided that army administrative services consisting of civilian personnel, coastguards, custom officers, forest guards, and the like were to be the same as in 1913. Police could be increased in proportion to increase in population on the basis of 1913 and they were not to have military training.

After limiting German effectives with the colours, and preventing evasion through training in other governmental services, the Allied military experts sought to limit the number of trained reserves in order to render impossible a very large expansion in case of mobilization. The most important provision was that abolishing compulsory military service and instituting voluntary enlistment for twelve consecutive years for N.C.O.s and privates, discharges in any year for any reason not to exceed 5 per cent of the total effectives allowed. Officers had to serve until forty-five years old, or for twenty-five consecutive years at least, and discharges could not exceed 5 per cent of the total effectives of officers. Military schools were limited to those necessary exclusively for the training of retained officers. No organization might occupy itself with military training. All measures of mobilization were forbidden and no formation could include supplementary cadres. Germany might send no military missions abroad and no Germans were to serve in foreign armies, except the French Legion which was governed by its own regulations.

The arms and ammunition permitted to the German Army were also very strictly regulated. Each division was allowed to retain only sufficient armament for its effectives and a limited number of guns no larger than 105 mm. in calibre. There was provided a small optional replacement reserve of one twenty-fifth of the set amount of ammunition for small arms and one-fiftieth for guns,

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although the Council of the League might allow change. The stocks of ammunition were to be kept only at specified depots. Existing armaments of fortifications which Germany was allowed to retain had to be reported to the Allies and were to constitute maximum amounts. Maximum stocks of ammunition for these guns were fixed. Manufacture of arms was to be carried on only in certain factories and all others had to be closed down. All excess armaments over figures stated were to be delivered to the Allies. All importation and exportation of armaments were forbidden to Germany. Importation and manufacture of asphyxiating, poisonous, or other gases and all analogous liquids, materials that go specially into the making of them, armoured cars, tanks, and the like, were prohibited. An additional safeguard against sudden aggression was added in the form of a provision that all fortifications west of a line drawn 50 kilometres east of the Rhine should be dismantled. At another place in the Treaty,¹ this zone and the west bank of the Rhine are permanently demilitarized.

This system of land disarmament made use of both quantitative and qualitative provisions in order to reduce the German Army to the lowest limit consistent "exclusively to the maintenance of order within the territory and to the control of the frontiers." Quantitatively the German Army was limited through the maximum number of effectives and arms and ammunition therefore, the maximum number of arms and ammunition of fortifications and the maximum number of discharges from service every year. The qualitative limitations imposed on the German Army related to the abolition of compulsory military service, the limitation of the maximum calibre of guns both in field and fortress artillery, the dismantlement of all fortresses within the demilitarized zone of the Rhine, the prohibition of importation and exportation of war material, the prohibition of the importation and manufacture of asphyxiating gases and analogous products, armoured cars, and tanks.

These provisions formed a complete system of limitation

¹ Articles 42 to 44.

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regulating, if strictly enforced, the actual number of men under the colours with their armaments and the number of men available upon mobilization. A rapid expansion was precluded by the strict provisions taken against the formation of a large body of trained reserves which could be incorporated in cadres in a moment of emergency. The limitation of material rendered almost impossible a major military action. The failure to limit budgetary expenditures on land armaments did not, as in the case of naval armaments, provide a means of evasion of the direct disarmament provisions. Within the narrow qualitative limits placed on land material there was little room for sensible qualitative improvement through expenditure of unusually large sums of money. Budgetary limitation might have acted as an additional check upon clandestine manufacture of war material and military training of youth in non-military formations, but such check would have been more illusory than real.

The method followed in limiting German land armaments was first to fix the number of effectives for Germany on the basis of the requirements for the maintenance of internal order and the policing of the frontiers. The material required for the equipment of these effectives as police force was then fixed, and other rules were laid down to control these primary limitations and prevent their evasion. To these limitations of immediately available armaments were added other provisions limiting Germany's power to wage war. These limitations brought to light for the first time the difference between Great Britain and France in the concept of "limitable armaments" which was later to come to the fore in the debates of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference.¹ In disarming Germany the British Government adopted the same methods it advocated in all post-war discussions. It was interested, as Lloyd George remarked, in reducing Germany's armed forces to a fixed quatum and then placing a limit on the armaments and munitions available for these forces.² It was a solution similar to that which it had advocated for naval disarmament. The French, on the other

¹ *Vide supra*, pp. 134-139.

² Miller, *op. cit.*, XIV, pp. 3-4.

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hand, were more interested in limiting the power of Germany to wage war.

In his memorandum on the military aspects of French safety, dated January 10, 1919, Foch insisted upon the Rhine being made the new military frontier of Germany.¹ The only way to preserve peace was for the Allies to form a military organization ready to come to the help of France in case of necessity. "It becomes necessary, therefore, that the Western barrier against German invasion should be more strongly constituted than in the past, and that the Powers of the Entente . . . be organized henceforth on a military basis to render possible the timely intervention of the other States which are the defenders of civilization."² In answer to Lloyd George's memorandum of March 26, 1919, Clemenceau stressed, as had Foch, the necessity of cutting up the territory of Germany to give to the new States.³ Forced by an uncompromising British and American position to give up its idea of separating the left bank of the Rhine from Germany, the French Government insisted on its occupation for thirty years and its demilitarization as well as that of a zone 50 kilometres east of the river. It would agree to these modified proposals only on the condition that a permanent Allied Commission should retain the right to supervise the execution of the Treaty by Germany, that France be granted her claims in the Saar and that the United States and Great Britain agree to give military help to France in case of aggression or entry of German troops into the demilitarized zone.⁴ The policy of France was quite clear: in case of invasion she wanted to be sure of military superiority over Germany.

¹ Memorandum of Marshal Foch, dated January 10, 1919, presenting the French demand for the military frontier of the Rhine. Baker, R. S., *op. cit.*, III, pp. 227-237; Mermeix, *Le Combat des Trois*, pp. 210-219. Foch's memorandum of November 27, 1918, had likewise called for the organization of the nations west of Germany with a view to war and to prepare for the eventual support of Great Britain (*ibid.*, pp. 205-210).

² Baker, R. S., *op. cit.*, III, p. 236.

³ Clemenceau's General Observations on Mr. Lloyd George's Note of March 26th (*ibid.*, III, pp. 249-252).

⁴ Seymour, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 409; Tardieu, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-140.

British Attitude on Land Disarmament

Failing acceptance of Foch's thesis of military organization with a view to German aggression, the French Government tried the negative aspect of the same policy—placing all limitations possible on the power of Germany to wage war, thereby ensuring military superiority to France and Belgium. Foch did not consider this a substitute for his plan of occupation of the Rhine. In a note distributed and read to the Council of Four on March 31, 1919, he said that unless the Rhine were held permanently there could be no neutrality, no disarmament, no written clause of any nature which could prevent Germany from seizing the Rhine and from debouching from it with advantage. There was no prospect of sufficient relief from England or America arriving in time to prevent a disaster in the plains of the North, to save France from complete defeat or from the necessity, to shelter her armies, to withdraw them without delay behind the Somme, or the Seine, or the Loire, there to await the help of her Allies.¹

Foch did not believe that the disarmament of Germany was a guarantee of French security. General Sir Henry Wilson records in his Diary for January 26, 1919, a meeting with Foch and Weygand:

"We discussed the possibility of limiting the enemy's number of trained men, and we were both agreed that it was impossible. . . . As Foch put it: we can no more limit the number of men trained to arms in Germany than the Germans could limit the output of coal in England. Then we discussed the possibility of checking and limiting guns, rifles, lorries, etc., and again we came to the conclusion that it would be quite impossible."²

In the meeting of the Supreme Council of February 7, 1919, Clemenceau stated that Foch "had always been opposed to the idea of imposing disarmament on Germany."³ Foch, himself, stated at the same meeting that "it would be impossible to prevent a country like Germany from doing what she wished at home. She would always be able to manufacture arms. The

¹ Reproduced in Mermeix, *op. cit.*, pp. 219-222.

² Callwell, *op. cit.*, II, p. 166.

³ Miller, *op. cit.*, XIV, p. 249. Cf. Memorandum of the French Government on the Fixation at the Rhine of the Western Frontier of Germany and on Inter-Allied Occupation of the Rhine Bridges (Tardieu, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-167).

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Allies could not stop all their industries.”¹ Nevertheless, it was at the instance of Clemenceau and Foch that the numbers of the German Army were decreased to 100,000 from the 140,000 which had first been agreed to.² Moreover, the French military experts tried everything they could do to cripple Germany permanently and limit perpetually her power to wage war, *i.e.* to attack France.

During the discussion of the military terms to be applied to Germany, the French proposed all sorts of regulations to make the system more rigid and incapable of evasion, *viz.* suggestions were made that all orders for new war material were to be reported to the Allied and Associated Powers, that there could be no discharges of soldiers except for health reasons, that military census and classification of horses fit for military purposes should be forbidden.³ While these suggestions were not accepted, others with similar intent were incorporated in the Treaty and formed permanent limitations of the power of Germany to wage war.⁴ The French also insisted on making the system permanent. At the meeting of March 3, 1919, Balfour objected that the military commission had been instructed to draw up a definitive, that is an explicit, military status for Germany but not a perpetual one. Clemenceau said

“He was not content to tell Germany to limit her forces until the peace terms were fulfilled, and to leave the future at the mercy of events. . . . Other countries might be content with transitory naval terms. He himself was not prepared to sign an invitation to Germany to prepare for another attack by land after an interval of three, ten, or even forty years. He would not be prepared to sign a peace of that character.”⁵

Sir Henry Wilson wrote regarding the military, naval, and air terms, “In my opinion, they are all much too drastic, but the French insisted on them, and the Frocks agreed.”⁶

¹ Miller, *op. cit.*, XIV, p. 239.

² *Ibid.*, XV, pp. 288–292.

³ Similarly, in the naval commission, the French called for the total disarmament of the Kiel Canal (*cf.* Bourgeois, *Le Traité de Paix de Versailles*, p. 73).

⁴ Tardieu, *op. cit.*, Chap. IV.

⁵ Miller, *op. cit.*, XV, pp. 138, 143; Tardieu, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

⁶ Callwell, *op. cit.*, II, p. 174.

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The policy of the French Government, in post-war years,¹ was to insure that in case of German aggression whatever military supremacy was given to France under the Treaty of Versailles should not be diminished. The defection of the United States and the consequent nullification of the British guarantee treaty strengthened French insistence upon full maintenance of her own armed forces. She attempted to strengthen her military position by alliances, guarantee treaties against aggression and the like, while at the same time insisting upon keeping Germany as weak as possible. She was, therefore, not in favour of disarmament except such as would maintain the relative French military supremacy in case of attack by Germany. This policy, and the strategical conception of the use of French armaments, determined the methods and proposals for the reduction and limitation of armaments which the French were ready to accept. On the one hand, they insisted on previous guarantees of security. On the other hand, they desired that all disarmament proposals should permit great freedom in actual armaments, leaving them military superiority, while limiting as much as possible the power to wage war—"war potential." To this conception the British Government opposed the method most advantageous to Great Britain, that of direct limitation of forces immediately available upon mobilization. This difference of opinion dominated the debates of the Preparatory Commission and arose in the modified form of equality of rights in the World Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments.

Land Disarmament at the Conference of Paris

The necessary disarmament of Germany having been decided upon, the Allied Governments turned to the problem of limiting their own armaments. Wilson, in his Fourteen Points, had laid

¹ After the experience of the Ruhr, the French Government turned to international co-operation for security. In accepting the Geneva Protocol, the French Government sought to substitute collective action for unilateral policy and to secure itself from German attack in a general pact of mutual assistance not aimed particularly at safeguarding the Eastern frontiers.

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down the principles which should govern a political settlement. An indispensable part of this settlement was the reduction of national armaments "to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety." This principle Wilson later incorporated in his first draft of the Covenant of the League of Nations. The British Government also maintained that the League of Nations was a necessary part of the political equilibrium set up by the Peace Treaties and that general disarmament was necessary to its effectiveness. In his memorandum to M. Clemenceau on March 26, 1919, Lloyd George made this clear.

"An essential element, therefore, in the peace settlement is the constitution of the League of Nations as the effective guardian of international right and international liberty throughout the world. If this is to happen, the first thing to do is that the leading members of the League of Nations should arrive at an understanding between themselves in regard to armaments."¹

Later he added that unless an understanding on competitive building was arrived at before the Covenant was signed "the League of Nations will be a sham and mockery."² Balfour had expressed himself in similar language at a meeting of the Council of Ten on January 21, 1919: "It is evident that a league of nations would be a sham if there is no disarmament."³

In his project for a society of nations dated December 16, 1918, General J. C. Smuts discussed the problem of disarmament in detail. One of the functions of the executive council was the formulation for the approval of the Governments of "general measures of international law, or arrangements for the limitation of armaments or promotion of world peace."⁴ He made a realistic study of the problems raised in attempts to reduce armaments and came to the conclusion that a general limitation of armaments was impracticable. Nevertheless, he did suggest the abolition of conscription. "I look upon conscription as the taproot of

¹ Cmd. 2169 of 1924, p. 80.

² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

³ Quoted in Baker, R. S., *op. cit.*, I, p. 351.

⁴ Miller, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 31-85; — — —, *The Drafting of the Covenant*, I, pp. 34-39.

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militarism; unless that is cut, all our labours will eventually be in vain.”¹ He suggested as an alternative “a simple militia system on a scale of numbers and service agreed upon by the league.”² Upon the basis of his analysis he recommended that certain principles of disarmament be included in the Covenant:

“15. That all the States represented at the peace conference shall agree to the abolition of conscription or compulsory military service; and that their future defence forces shall consist of militia or volunteers, whose numbers and training shall, after expert enquiry, be fixed by the council of the League.

“16. That while the limitation of armaments in the general sense is impracticable, the council of the League shall determine what direct military equipment and armament is fair and reasonable in respect of the scale of forces laid down under paragraph 15, and that the limitation fixed by the council shall not be exceeded without its permission.”³

These principles of limitation of armaments Wilson incorporated in his Article IV, which already provided for the recognition by the Members that the maintenance of peace required the reduction of armaments to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety and the enforcement of international obligations. They were contained in the Cecil-Miller Draft of January 27, 1919,⁴ but it was agreed by Wilson and Cecil on January 31st that this should be modified in accordance with the Italian view that Italy could not abolish conscription.⁵ The Hurst-Miller Draft which formed the basis of discussion of the League of Nations Commission therefore provided that the council

“shall also enquire into the feasibility of abolishing compulsory military service and the substitution therefor of forces enrolled upon a voluntary basis and into the naval and military equipment which it is reasonable to maintain.”⁶

¹ Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris*, III, p. 68.

² *Ibid.*, III, p. 69.

³ *Ibid.*, III, p. 73.

⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 185-186.

⁵ The Italians objected to the abolition of conscription because theirs was such a poor country that they could have no army except by conscription (*ibid.*, I, p. 102). Notes on conversations between Wilson, Orlando, House, and Scialoja, January 30, 1919 (*ibid.*, IV, pp. 341-343).

⁶ Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant*, II, pp. 231-237.

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In the fourth meeting of the Commission, M. Bourgeois objected strenuously even to the allusion to a possible abolition of conscription. In view of these objections there was nothing to do but to omit all mention of conscription. To this Lord Robert Cecil perforce agreed in spite of the fact that British public opinion demanded the abolition of conscription everywhere.¹

To meet M. Bourgeois's objections President Wilson moved the substitution for the above cited sentence in the Hurst-Miller Draft of a sentence which he took bodily from his Second Paris Draft:

"The Executive Council shall also determine for the consideration and action of the several Governments what military equipment and armament is fair and reasonable in proportion to the sale of forces laid down in the programme of disarmament and these limits, when adopted shall not be exceeded without the permission of the Body of Delegates."²

Wilson had thought this proposal so important that he had reintegrated it in his Third Paris Draft, which he had hoped to make the basis of the discussion of the Commission on the League of Nations, and he now seized the first opportunity to get it accepted. The proposal was taken directly from Smuts's project and set forth the only principles of limitation of land armaments which Smuts had thought practicable. They were the principles which had been applied to Germany. After agreeing on the scale of forces to be maintained the Council was to advise on the material which was fair and proportionate to those forces. This proposal was accepted by the Commission. It passed through the second reading and formed a part of the Covenant which was read to the Peace Conference on February 14, 1919. It was dropped, however, at Cecil's instance, in the text agreed upon by Wilson and Cecil on March 18, 1919, and this amendment was approved by the Commission on the League of Nations on March 22nd.³

¹ 114 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 986; 117 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 760 ff.; 118 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 668 ff.

² Records of the fourth meeting of the Commission on the League of Nations, Miller, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 289-297. Cf. *ibid.*, I, pp. 168-179.

³ Miller, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 70-76, 168-179, 276-303, 310-322; II, pp. 287-297, 317-319.

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None of the proposals for general land disarmament which had been brought up in connection with the League of Nations were adopted. Not only was there no limitation accepted at the Peace Conference but all the definite principles governing future limitation as set up in the Covenant proved unacceptable and were eventually discarded. Only the vague understanding contained in the fourth of the Fourteen Points was retained, with the provision that the Council should advise the members regarding the execution of this undertaking. Even this, however, proved unacceptable to the British Army Council. It joined the Admiralty and the Air Council in a memorandum disapproving of the inclusion of disarmament provisions in the Covenant of the League of Nations and protesting strongly against "the abrogation of their constitutional duty of advising their Government as to the strength of their military Forces."¹

Another opportunity for including concrete measures of disarmament in the peace settlement arose during the discussions of the treaty of peace with Austria, and the British Prime Minister seized the occasion to insist once more on the need for armaments limitation. As in the case of the German Treaty, discussion on the military clauses centred around conscription with the British and Americans in favour of abolition and the French and Italian in opposition. Supporting the abolition of conscription in Austria, Lloyd George raised the whole problem of the general reduction of armaments of the Central European and Balkan States in order to stop the continual fighting which had been going on since the Armistice. He said that

"the very first chapter . . . raised a very big question of principle which would have to be considered, not only in regard to Austria, but also in reference to all the new little States which might be formed. Should it be decided that each of these little States, including Rumania, Czecho-Slovakia, and Jugo-Slavia, were each to be allowed to maintain comparatively large armies, nothing would keep them from going to war with one another. . . . In his opinion, it was essential that the Council should lay down definite principles in regard to armaments,

¹ Miller, *op. cit.*, I, p. 287.

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which would be applied to Austria, Hungary and all the adjoining States.”¹

Wilson supported Lloyd George, saying that the Supreme Council had always planned to limit the armaments of these nations. Orlando, although he feared that the abolition of conscription might become contagious if applied to Austria and Hungary, supported Lloyd George’s proposal and approved of the study of “armament plans to be enforced in all parts of the late Austro-Hungarian Empire.”² In order to have a guarantee against the bellicose spirit of small nations—for, as he said, the oppressed become easily the oppressors—Lloyd George proposed to refer the problem of limitation of their armaments to a commission. General Sir Henry Wilson asked on what basis the study should be made, and Lloyd George answered that it should be based on the regime imposed on Germany. Thereupon, the Council referred the whole problem to the military experts, asking them to submit a report “showing what forces should be allowed to Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Jugoslavia (including Montenegro), Rumania, Poland, Bulgaria and Greece, taking the German figures as a proportional standard.”³

This report was submitted on May 23rd. It allotted the armaments of the small States on the basis of the armaments already allowed to Germany: Austria, 15,000 men; Hungary, 18,000; Bulgaria, 10,000; Czechoslovakia, 22,000; Jugoslavia, 20,000; Rumania, 28,000; Poland, 44,000; and Greece, 12,000. The military experts did not think these forces sufficient for small

¹ Quoted in Baker, R. S., *op. cit.*, I, p. 400.

² *Ibid.*, I, p. 402.

³ Baker, R. S., *op. cit.*, I, p. 402; Temperley, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 152; Beadon, *op. cit.*, p. 131. Sir Henry Wilson writes in his Diary for May 15th: “We then went over to Cousin’s house [President Wilson’s] and, with four Frocks and military and naval experts, we discussed the military terms for Austria. We had given Austria a 40,000 voluntary army. The Frocks thought that this was excessive, and Tiger thought 12,000 to 15,000 ample. The population of the new Austria is only 8 millions. Tiger said soldiers were always making wars, whereas the Frocks made peace. I here interjected the remark that there were twenty-one wars going on at this moment, which delighted Lloyd George but upset the Tiger and my Cousin! Finally settled that we soldiers should see how many troops the other small States should have, as I pointed out that it was manifestly unfair to cripple Austria and to allow Czechos, Yugos and Rumanians to have enormous armies” (Callwell, *op. cit.*, II, p. 193).

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States and therefore suggested the substitution of other figures based on the 40,000 men originally attributed to Austria; such as 80,000 men for Poland, 50,000 for Czechoslovakia, and 20,000 for Bulgaria.¹ This caused much difficulty in the Council of Four because of the impossibility of enforcing too strict measures of disarmament on the small States. As Lloyd George put it, Austria and Germany could not be disarmed and left at the mercy of the small Powers, and, on the other hand, Austria could not be left free to have any army she chose because then the same freedom would have to be given to the small surrounding States, creating an impossible situation from the German point of view. There must be justice even for the German peoples.

The discussion was resumed on May 25th, during the examination of the military and naval terms of the Treaty of St. Germain. At this meeting General Bliss expressed the views of the military experts. Their figures were based on purely military considerations, bearing in mind for each country the number of inhabitants, the geographical situation, the nature of the land and maritime frontiers, the occupations of the population, etc. On the basis of the figures allowed to Germany, and about 15,000 men for Austria, the military effectives of the small States became insignificant. This would result either in making the small States military dependencies of France or Italy or in driving them into the arms of the Germans. General Bliss would, therefore, maintain the larger figures presented by the military experts. The problem of the disarmament of the Central European countries was postponed until after receipt of the observations of the German Government on the Treaty of Versailles. Clemenceau even suggested its reference to the League of Nations. It was agreed on June 4th to limit the armaments of Austria to 30,000 men raised by voluntary service,² but the Council of Four could not agree on the limitation of the armaments of the other States. No further result was reached at a special meeting attended by the representatives of the small Powers to discuss the problem. Every one agreed to the principle that armaments should be limited but

¹ Baker, R. S., *op. cit.*, I, pp. 403-404.

² Callwell, *op. cit.*, II, p. 196.

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no one was ready to accept a definite engagement to limit them at any given date.¹

Except for the disarmament of the enemies no concrete provision for reduction of land armaments was accepted at Paris. The effort made in Anglo-American quarters to abolish conscription and to limit the war material of all signatories to Part I of the Treaty of Versailles had to be abandoned in view of the opposition of France and Italy. For different reasons a similar effort limited to the Central European and Balkan States met with the same fate. Only in the case of the defeated countries were practical proposals worked out. Agreement, however, was reached on the principle of disarmament, and the disarmament of the enemy countries was carried through as a first step toward the general reduction and limitation of armaments. The Great Powers therefore postponed the consideration of proposals for the limitation of their land armaments and struck the political equilibrium in Europe without including actual limitation. The result of this policy was that when attempts were made to limit armaments as provided for at Versailles a new political equilibrium had to be sought at the cost of much friction.

The Post-War Military Policy of Great Britain

The signing of the Armistice found the British public eager to throw off the burden of large armaments. With public opinion clamouring for speedy demobilization and the abolition of conscription, Sir Auckland Geddes stopped all recruiting on November 12, 1918.² The soldiers on leave refused to re-embark for France and the War Office was confronted with the task of speedy reorganization of the Army before discipline should completely break down. Yet the Armistice had not brought to an end the demand for British troops. The occupation of the Rhine, the Russian campaigns, and the fighting in the Near East and the Eastern Front of Germany combined to make a large call

¹ Baker, R. S., *op. cit.*, I, pp. 393-407; Temperley, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 138.

² Callwell, *op. cit.*, II, p. 151.

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on British military resources. Moreover, the Imperial tasks of the British Army were rendered more difficult by the troubles in Ireland, Egypt, and India. The situation at home also required the presence of disciplined troops to ensure the continued maintenance of order. To meet the exigencies of the moment the Cabinet, in January 1919, agreed to a scheme to raise 1,000,000 men by compulsory service for twelve months.¹

The War Office immediately considered the future peace organization of the Army. The settlement of peace was adding responsibilities—on the Rhine, in Iraq, Palestine, Transjordan, and the African Mandates. It was necessary, therefore, to estimate the demands which the new commitments would make on the British Army and conclude what strength the straitened financial situation would allow. Early in 1919 the Government gave instructions that the estimates for the three Fighting Services were to be built up “on the assumption that no great war was to be anticipated within the next ten years, although provisions should be made for the possible expansion of trained units in case of an emergency arising.”² During the debates on the Army Estimates on March 3, 1919, the Secretary of State for War, Mr. Churchill, said that the War Office was considering either the pre-war system of Territorial Force, Yeomanry, and Special Reserve, or else an Indian Army and a small short service Home Army to develop trained reserves.³

The problem of the post-war British Army was solved by the fact that it was absolutely necessary, for political reasons, to rebuild the fourteen Territorial Divisions.⁴ The War Office, therefore, decided to organize defence on the same basis as before the war with a Regular Army and a Reserve with Militia and Territorial Forces. The only difference was that the Territorial Forces could be used outside the United Kingdom in case of

¹ Callwell, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 164-166.

² Cmd. 1581 of 1922, p. 6; Callwell, *op. cit.*, II, p. 211.

³ 113 *H.C. Deb.*, 5 s., cols. 77-79.

⁴ Callwell, *op. cit.*, II, p. 211. The C.I.G.S. held that the Territorial Force wholly devoted to repel invasion was a farce since there was no longer any danger to Great Britain.

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national danger. On February 10, 1920, Mr. Churchill announced that conscription would come to an end on March 31, 1920, as a voluntary army of about 220,000 men had already been raised.¹ By October 1920, the Regular Army numbered 299,774 men of all ranks. The Army Reserve stood at 63,634, and the Special Reserve at 982. The Territorial Forces numbered 60,072 with a permanent staff of 2,186.² The Regular Army was thus larger than the pre-war Army which numbered 174,329,³ but this increase was accounted for by the large demands made by new commitments and the still comparatively unsettled state of the world.

The policy finally adopted by the War Office was explained by Lord Cecil in the first session of the Preparatory Commission on May 18, 1926.

"The British Army does not depend in any respect on the strength of foreign armies. It makes no difference to the size of the British Army (and it never has made any difference for many years past) whether its neighbours maintain large or small armies. The Army, so far as it is kept at home, no doubt discharges certain functions. It discharges the function of a garrison. It has to assist the civil power, in the very rare occasion of public disturbance, in maintaining order; and it is also supposed to be ready to assist in resisting any sudden invasion of our shores, though such invasion has long been looked upon as an almost incredible hypothesis.

"The size of the Army, however, does not depend on either of those functions; its size entirely depends on the necessity for discharging our overseas commitments. We have possessions in various parts of the globe, of which the great Dominion of India is the chief, though there are many others. For those we have to maintain certain forces. We have to do the same in respect of certain commitments in countries which do not in any way belong to the British Empire, such as Egypt, Mesopotamia and Palestine, where we have certain definite engagements. The British Army really exists in order to supply the needs of those overseas commitments, and its size is really determined (so I am informed and believe) entirely by those overseas commitments. That places it in a rather special position, since its size does not depend on the size of other armies. If it were possible to reduce it, no one would be better

¹ 125 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1339 *et seq.*

² General Annual Report of the British Army, Cmd. 1610 of 1922, p. 18.

³ *Parliamentary Sessional Paper* (49) of 1920, p. 4.

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pleased than the British Government, although I do not know that a general scheme of disarmament is likely to be of great assistance in that respect.”¹

The post-war British Army was based on the Cardwell System and its size depended principally, therefore, on the Imperial commitments of Great Britain. As before the war, the regiments remaining at home in reserve for the troops overseas were organized as an Expeditionary Force to protect Imperial interests and fulfil the international commitments entailed in the League of Nations and the Locarno Treaties. Home Defence was provided for by the Territorial Force as well as by the regiments of the Regular Army remaining at home. With the settlement of peace and the assumption by the Royal Air Force of certain duties of policing the Empire the Imperial commitments of the British Army decreased. On account of the pressing financial situation which made reductions in expenditure imperative, and the growth of pacifism which made recruiting difficult, the size of the British Army was steadily reduced during the post-war years.

The Estimates for 1921-1922 provided “for an average throughout the year of 192,500 officers and other ranks, and for the numbers being reduced by March 31, 1922, to 186,000.” As there were 16,000 more to be discharged on that date the number on April 1, 1922, was to be 170,000.² Reductions were made yearly except in 1927, and in 1933 the Estimates called for 148,700 men of all ranks in the Regular Army and 120 to 125,000 in the Army Reserves.³ In 1934 this figure was increased

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series II, p. 14. According to the First Interim Report of the Geddes Committee on National Expenditure, “The Army has no . . . standard [based on comparison with foreign armies] to guide it. It appears that the Army Estimates are framed to provide certain garrisons overseas, together with a system of reliefs for those garrisons, known as the ‘Cardwell System.’ This has in the past resulted in a theoretical six Infantry Divisions and one Cavalry Division at home which, together with certain additional Infantry units, formed the British Expeditionary Force in 1914. The estimates are cast to provide such a force again, only much more powerfully equipped, with additional arms, born of war experience, e.g., Tanks, Signals and Heavy Artillery—and irrespective of the estimates of the Air Ministry. A small provision is also made for Home Guards” (Cmd. 1581 of 1922, p. 6).

² 139 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1279 *et seq.*

³ Cmd. 4259 of 1933.

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to 149,500 for the Regular Army while it was estimated that the Army Reserves would fall from 119,500 to 111,300 by the end of the financial year. The Territorial Army, after falling to 6,901 officers and 120,167 men in 1933, increased to 7,015 officers and 125,721 other ranks on January 1, 1934.¹ These figures show a decrease of 24,829 in the Regular Army from the pre-war strength and a decrease of almost 100,000 men in the Army Reserves. The decrease in the Territorial Army for the same period was 4,243 officers and 175,911 other ranks.²

With this decrease in the number of effectives in the British Army it became necessary to develop the forces available in such a way as to make them as effective as possible. This raised the question of how much the organization of the British post-war Army should reflect the lessons of the war. The extended use of machine guns, the development of tanks, signal corps, and heavy artillery had played an important part in the World War and it was the duty of the War Office to determine to what extent the British Army should be equipped with these new weapons to make it most effective. The task of the British Army remained essentially the same as before the war, that of policing the Empire and garrisoning strategic centres. In the performance of these tasks it encountered no probable enemy provided with the latest weapons of warfare. A policeman, moreover, must be seen: a regiment of infantry inspires more confidence as a police force in the marches of the Empire than does a company of tanks.³ As a defence force for the Empire against aggression from outlying tribes and as Imperial police force the British Army could retain its pre-war organization. But as a diplomatic weapon to be used when necessary against Continental nations, the British Army needed to be equipped and trained as a modern army with all the newer weapons developed during the war. The Foreign Service Army performed the task of Empire defence and Imperial police force while the Home Service Army served to apply the required pressure upon European diplomacy. In view of its

¹ Cmd. 4518 of 1934.

² Cf. Cmd. 1829 of 1923.

³ Cf. 287 *H.C. Deb.*, 5 s., cols. 613-615.

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extremely small size, the Home Service Army had to be all the more effective. The difficulty lay in the fact that, under the Cardwell System, the Home Army was merely a training establishment and reserve for the Foreign Service Army and, therefore, could not be organized altogether as a modern expeditionary force.

After the war a policy of experimentation was adopted. The policy of the Imperial General Staff in February 1920 was to

“form experimental brigades at our large training centres and try out certain changes in tactics—the employment of cavalry and infantry with tanks and machine guns, aeroplanes and other weapons, including the employment of smoke, etc. . . . When we have carried out these tests we shall decide finally on our future organization.”¹

The General Staff proceeded to disband the cavalry for formation as mechanized units. On March 15, 1921, Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, Secretary of State for War, said that “the general view is that mechanical means of fighting must be developed to the fullest extent.”² The policy of the Imperial General Staff in 1925 was to form a new army capable of maintaining a war of movement in which it could attain advances of one hundred miles in twenty-four hours.³ On March 22, 1927, the War Department had 336 tanks and 158 armoured cars of which 199 tanks were of war designs and 16 armoured cars needed re-conditioning; 16 tanks and 5 armoured cars were under construction.⁴ Arrangements were made to assemble an Experimental Mechanical Force, composed of entirely mechanized units of Artillery, Engineers, Signals, Infantry, and Tank Corps, to study the tactical employment and the organization of a highly mobile force of this nature.⁵

Development was so rapid that, on February 28, 1929, Sir Laming Worthington-Evans could say that

¹ Cmd. 565 of 1920, p. 3.

² 139 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1288.

³ Cf. Fuller, Col. J. F. C., “Progress in the Mechanicalization of Modern Armies,” *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, 70, p. 76.

⁴ 204 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 229–230.

⁵ Cmd. 2810 of 1927, p. 8. *Vide* Liddell Hart, *British Way in Warfare*, pp. 185–258.

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"In the Royal Tank Corps a modern type of tank has replaced the old wartime tanks, and we have carried out experiments and research on a large scale, and with such success that we can confidently claim to lead the world not only in our equipment of tanks but also in our ideas as to their use in war."¹

Centring attention on the problem of mobility, the General Staff developed a system of mixed tanks formations, of which Sir Laming said:

"We anticipate that this organization of light and medium armoured brigades, when combined suitably with cavalry and infantry formations, should provide us with a force suited for every type of country and for every form of manoeuvre which may be necessary from the passive defence to the attack, the wide turning movement or the headlong pursuit."²

The objective of the Army officials was to mechanize the Army as an Imperial force rather than to mechanize it on the more limited standard required for European war. This purpose was made plain by Mr. Duff Cooper, Financial Secretary to the War Office, on March 15, 1934.

"We have to provide a force which may be called upon to defend the interests of the Empire outside these shores, perhaps in Imperial territory, perhaps in some foreign land; a force which may be called to fight in a country which nobody can foretell and under conditions which nobody can foresee."³

British Army policy after the war was dominated by the necessity for reduction in cost and in size. The usual post-war agitation for reduction of armaments made itself felt more strongly than ever, and, as usual, the Army was the centre of attention. The assumption of many Imperial police duties by the Royal Air Force permitted reduction to be made without too greatly sacrificing the competence of the Army. The small effectives were multiplied in efficiency through the judicious use of mechanical devices for protection, mobility, and increased fire power. In spite of the reductions, feeling persisted in certain quarters that

¹ 225 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 2214-2215.

² *Ibid.*, col. 2216.

³ 287 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 601.

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the British Government ought to reduce further its land forces in order to give an impetus to international disarmament. This reduction in effectives could not continue indefinitely as the British Army in 1932 was, according to the criterion of the Hoover proposals, "insufficient at present to carry out merely the police duties for which it is responsible in the British Empire."¹ Speaking at the Annual Dinner of the City Lieutenants' Club, on October 31, 1932, Lord Hailsham, Secretary of State for War, emphasized the fact that, because of the financial situation and the desire to give the lead in the cause of disarmament, the British Army had been reduced to the final limit consistent with safety.²

Land Disarmament Before the World Disarmament Conference

Although the size of the British Army was not regulated by the size of the army of any other country, and although it was only large enough for the police duties assigned to it, the British Government was anxious to co-operate in any general scheme for the limitation of land armaments. Throughout the debates on the limitation of military budgets, in the First and Second Assemblies, the British representatives endeavoured to secure general agreement on such limitation. They also supported the resolution for the creation of the Temporary Mixed Commission to study the problems of disarmament. In this Commission British interest in the reduction of armaments again clashed with the French desire for security, *i.e.* for the insurance of military superiority in case of unprovoked aggression by Germany. Lord Esher's proposal for the limitation of European armies by ratios fixed on the basis of the Austrian Army was rejected as impractical by the Permanent Advisory Commission and the Temporary Mixed Commission because it did not take into account necessary factors of strength, cadre, material, budget, etc. On the other hand, the Temporary Mixed Commission adopted the proposal of Lord Robert Cecil that disarmament must proceed side by side with provisions for security.

¹ 275 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1367.

² *The Times*, November 1, 1932.

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Meanwhile, the American Government invited the five large Naval Powers to a conference at Washington to discuss the limitation of armaments. The British delegation came to Washington ready to reach agreement on the limitation of land armaments as well as naval armaments. At the second plenary meeting of the Conference, on November 15, 1921, Mr. Balfour remarked that the American proposal

“does not touch a question which every man coming from Europe must feel to be a question of immense and almost paramount importance; I mean the heavy burden of land armament. That is left on one side, to be dealt with by other schemes and in other ways.”¹

At the same meeting M. Briand stated that he would make clear France's attitude on the subject “at the proper moment.” The proper moment arrived in the third plenary session, on November 21st. In an eloquent appeal, M. Briand explained the military policy of the French Government which insisted upon maintaining all its armaments so long as Germany was not morally disarmed. It was impossible for France to do more than she had already done towards disarmament. This could be changed, however, if other nations would guarantee to France the security she desired. M. Briand thus reiterated the French policy of Versailles steadily adhered to throughout post-war years, that France must maintain military superiority over Germany and will decrease this military force only if, by means of “security guarantees,” someone else's force can be added to hers to ensure victory over the Germans in case of aggression.

Mr. Balfour regretted that the speech of M. Briand offered no immediate solution to the problem of land armaments, but he assured him that in a situation similar to that of 1914 British help would once again be forthcoming. At the second meeting of the Committee on the Limitation of Armaments, on November 23rd, Mr. Balfour enquired what was to be done with regard to land disarmament. “If nothing could be done in this matter, there would be a sense of disappointment in Europe as well as in America.”² Great Britain “could not consent to the whole

¹ *Sen. Doc.*, No. 126, 67th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 68.

² *Ibid.*, p. 241.

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question of land and air armaments being . . . withdrawn from the purview of the conference.”¹ M. Briand maintained his point that France must be able to defend her frontiers alone unless some other Power were willing to share this burden with her. As no Power was ready to do this, the subject of land armaments was dropped from the agenda.

The French point of view which prevailed at Washington was equally dominant in Geneva. The Third Assembly (1922) adopted the famous Resolution XIV which established the principle that security against attack must be provided for simultaneously with an agreement to limit armaments. In the debates on this resolution Mr. H. A. L. Fisher accepted it as a suggestion upon which the Temporary Mixed Commission could proceed with its labours, without committing his Government to any particular proposal. Work was conducted along the line indicated, and the following year the Temporary Mixed Commission brought out its Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance in case of unprovoked aggression. This failed to be accepted and the 1924 Assembly drafted the Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, which added arbitration to security and disarmament to form the mystic trilogy, the Holy Trinity of Peace. These were all attempts to arrive at a limitation of armaments, particularly land armaments, within the political system established at Versailles. Under this political equilibrium France felt it necessary to maintain military superiority over Germany to ensure the safety of her frontiers. In view of the financial, social, and political pressure for disarmament, attempts were made in the League of Nations to draft treaties which, by pooling the armaments of all Members to place them at the disposal of one in cases of necessity, would permit the reduction of armaments within the existing political equilibrium.

In the hope that the forthcoming Locarno Conference would establish some measure of security warranting disarmament, the Sixth Assembly (1925) decided to resume the study of the methods of disarmament already suggested by the Temporary Mixed

¹ *Sen. Doc.*, No. 126, 67th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 244.

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Commission in its report on the Esher plan and to recommend the establishment therefor of a Preparatory Commission to prepare for a conference on the reduction and limitation of armaments to be called as soon as possible. The Council set up the Preparatory Commission in December 1925, giving it as guide for its discussions a questionnaire drafted by the Committee of the Council. During the discussion of this questionnaire, both in the first session of the Preparatory Commission in May 1926 and in Sub-Commission A, the difference on disarmament between Great Britain and France again cropped up.

The British Government considered that security lay in proportionate disarmament carried out by all countries and leaving them an established relative strength. Elimination of the factors of competition and uncertainty would engender a greater feeling of security. This attitude was influenced by the strategic position of Great Britain as a Naval Power with a small army.¹ The danger to the security of Great Britain, under these conditions, lies in a large striking force capable of a "knockout blow," while she is mobilizing her Territorial Force for Home Defence. Her own strength on land rests in her industrial power which requires time before it can be fully utilized. The limitation of the forces and material available immediately upon mobilization is, from the British point of view, the most effective way to limit land armaments because it limits what to British eyes are "aggressive forces," and does not hamper the "defensive forces." The British Government had advocated this method for the limitation of German armaments and it had been accepted although made more stringent by the French.

The French attitude arose from their desire to maintain military superiority over Germany. In order to repel aggression it is necessary to maintain a large immediately available force which can deliver the quick attack upon which French strategy depends for victory.² The French, moreover, are convinced that they have

¹ *Vide supra*, pp. 134-135. Cf. Liddell Hart, Captain B. H., *The Remaking of Modern Armies*, Chap. XIV.

² *Vide supra*, pp. 135-137.

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a distinct inferiority in the other forces which can be brought into play after the opening of hostilities, *i.e.* "war potential." The interest of France, therefore, is to keep intact her large and effective striking force while limiting war potential as much as possible. Any limitation of her existing armed forces can be made only in exchange for the assurance that the armed forces of her neighbours will join her own to repulse an attack upon her frontiers. To the French Government the relative ratio advocated by the British was already set, the limited armaments of Germany to the existing armaments of France.¹ Only the maintenance of this ratio either unilaterally, through her own means, or co-operatively, with the help of others, could ensure French security.

This fundamental difference in concepts of disarmament led to technical differences in methods of limiting armaments. In Sub-Commission A the British military experts advocated limitation of the forces in service in peace-time and the limitation of militarily trained reserves, as being the forces available immediately upon mobilization. The French experts, on the other hand, advocated only the limitation of forces under the colours in peace-time; they opposed the limitation of trained reserves which they defined to include all the man potential of a nation. The British experts favoured the direct limitation of war material in service and in reserve, while the French experts opposed such limitation as being difficult to carry out and dangerous to the effectiveness of national defence. They advocated indirect limitation through limitation of budgetary expenditures which the British, in their turn, felt to be misleading.

These opposing conceptions of the methods of limiting armaments, based on different strategical needs, were incorporated in the British and French draft conventions presented to the Preparatory Commission at the opening of its third session in March 1927. The British draft proposed a limitation of land

¹ France had taken German disarmament into consideration when decreasing her own land forces after the war and had disarmed unilaterally to the lowest point she considered safe in view of the existing state of international relations.

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armaments by limiting only land effectives including trained reserves and the limitation of officers, warrant officers, and sergeants. The French draft proposed the limitation of all effectives, land, sea, and air, in service and in formations organized on a military basis. Period of service was also limited. Land war material was limited through the limitation of budgetary expenditure. The task of the Preparatory Commission was to harmonize the two drafts in one text to serve as basis of the negotiations of the Disarmament Conference. This task was not accomplished until December 9, 1930, when the Preparatory Commission accepted a Draft Convention to be submitted to the Council for approval.

According to this Draft Convention the average daily effectives in land, sea, and air armed forces and formations organized on a military basis were not to exceed the figures given in annexed tables. The tables for land armaments provided for the limitation of the total number of land effectives and a limitation of the number of effectives stationed at home, with an optional limitation of the maximum effectives stationed overseas. In each category the total effectives, the officers and the effectives having completed more than x years of service were to be limited. The same was true of land formations organized on a military basis except that there were only two tables, limiting formations at home and formations overseas. The period of service for each country with conscription was limited and a general limit was also set beyond which no country might go. Land war material was limited indirectly through the limitation of annual expenditure on the upkeep, purchase, and manufacture of such material.¹

The method of limiting land effectives contained in the Draft Convention was essentially that advocated by the French and had already been agreed upon at the third session of the Preparatory Commission in March 1927. At that time discussion had centred on the limitation of trained reserves. The British delegation had been particularly insistent upon the inclusion of

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series X, pp. 597-620.

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trained reserves in the peace-time effectives to be limited. In view of the stubborn resistance of countries with conscription, the question of the limitation of trained reserves had been postponed until the second reading. In the eyes of the British Government the limitation of trained reserves entailed the abolition of conscription, an aim which it had not abandoned since the war. It was impossible, according to the British Government, to have any adequate system of limitation of armaments so long as there existed a system which enabled a country to call out the whole of its manhood at the outbreak of war. Trained reserves, therefore, formed the issue on which the abolition of conscription was fought. Nevertheless, the British Government, during the negotiations on the Anglo-French Compromise of 1928, agreed to abandon its insistence on the limitation of trained reserves in exchange for a corresponding abandonment by the French Government of its insistence on the complete transfer of tonnage in the limitation of naval material.

The British, however, had not changed their opinion on conscription. Although they withdrew their reservation on the limitation of trained reserves in the first part of the sixth session of the Preparatory Commission, they did so merely to facilitate agreement. Lord Cushendun said on April 27, 1929:

“We are making a first step, and we shall have plenty of room for improvement and progress as time goes on, and it is in that spirit, and that spirit alone, that I am consenting to give up a position which I think of importance, and which I believe will be some day reached as the ideal we have in view, but I am content to give it up in order to get something practical done in the meantime, and to get a good foundation on which we shall be able to build a more complete and ideal structure later on.”¹

This decision was not changed and the final text of the Draft Convention contained no provision limiting trained reserves in any way which might prejudice the system of conscription. In his despatch to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs sub-

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series VIII, p. 123.

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mitting the Draft Convention, on December 10, 1930, Lord Cecil explained the whole position:

"The Draft Convention does not prohibit conscription. Although His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have always favoured such prohibition, and although I on more than one occasion indicated to the Commission that that was the view of my Government, there was clearly no prospect whatever of inducing the Governments resorting to conscription to abandon that system. Their reasons, with which you are already familiar, are for the moment insuperable."¹

The method of limiting land war material contained in the Draft Convention was also that proposed by the French delegation. From the first the French had advocated indirect limitation of war material through the limitation of budgetary expenditure. In Sub-Commission A the British experts had opposed such limitation as likely to lead to invidious comparisons and had proposed as more just and effective the direct limitation of war material in service and in reserve. In its Draft Convention the British delegation had omitted all limitation of war material, providing merely for exchange of information on the expenditures for land armaments every year. In the debates on the German proposal for the direct limitation of war material the British delegation had taken no part. In the debates on budgetary limitation, however, Lord Cecil once more opposed the limitation of budgetary expenditures, preferring to it a systematized form of publicity on expenditures. On April 8, 1927, he said:

"Now, as to the possibility of limiting expenses, personally, I am very strongly convinced that a limitation of armament expenses is exceedingly desirable. I would not say it is absolutely necessary; I think it is a very important secondary method of limiting armaments. I think it is very likely the only way in which you can limit the actual weapons employed on land. I am very anxious that we should do it, but I am not convinced that the proposal to state a figure beyond which expenses shall not go is, at the present stage of the question, the most practically efficient way of accomplishing our object."²

¹ Cmd. 3757 of 1931, p. 4.

² *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series IV, p. 196.

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In the first part of the sixth session of the Preparatory Commission Lord Cushendun expressed preference for the French plan, but he said he would support any proposal which found general assent, since he had already stated he would follow other delegations in the matter of land disarmament. On May 4, 1929, the Preparatory Commission passed a resolution in which, having rejected the system of direct limitation of war material and having noted that the system of indirect limitation did not meet with general assent, it decided that limitation and reduction of material had to be sought by means of publicity of expenditure.¹ In spite of this decision, the question was again raised in the second part of the sixth session. The building of the *Deutschland* had demonstrated the shortcomings of the direct limitation of naval material, and this profoundly influenced British attitude.

Lord Cecil's explanation of the policy of the British Government on the limitation of land material, on November 11, 1930, revealed the change which had taken place since 1927.

"Therefore, whilst I am in favour of publication [of expenditure] as the basis of further steps towards limitation, I do not regard it as sufficient, or as a serious improvement on the state of things at present existing. Unless you lay down some standard for the strength of the material, the mere publication of how much there is will not produce any effect in limiting its amount."²

After thus abandoning the position taken in the third session, Lord Cecil proceeded to destroy the case for direct limitation advocated by the British experts in Sub-Commission A. He concluded regarding this method,

"If I can be satisfied that in certain of the arms, the bigger arms for instance, some method of direct limitation can be devised which is reasonably satisfactory, I would not oppose it; but I am quite sure that, unless it is combined with some other limitation, it is an unsatisfactory system."³

The only remaining system of limitation was that advocated since

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series VIII, pp. 179-181.

² *Ibid.*, Series X, p. 69.

³ *Ibid.*, Series X, p. 70.

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the beginning by the French and for which Lord Cushendun had expressed preference. Lord Cecil now said of it,

“Therefore, I believe that, as a practical business move, the limiting of expenditure is going to be the most effective way in which you can limit the growth of material.”¹

In the voting on the methods of limiting land armaments, on November 14th, Lord Cecil voted for budgetary limitation, abstained from voting on direct limitation, and voted against a combination of both methods. The result of this voting was the text included in the Draft Convention providing for budgetary limitation but also calling attention, in a footnote, to the fact that direct limitation had not been rejected and that a combination of both methods had been rejected by a majority of two votes. The solution adopted in the Draft Convention was, therefore, inconclusive.

Considerations of strategy determined the methods of limitation of armaments advocated by the military experts in Sub-Commission A. Other factors intervened in later discussions to strengthen or weaken these strategic considerations. The insistence of the British Government on limitation of trained reserves was due, in the first instance, to the desire to limit the immediate striking force of a country, which force, in view of its own strategic needs, it considered particularly aggressive. But there was also, in this insistence, the desire to abolish conscription for social reasons. Universal military service is considered in France the embodiment of the democratic spirit of the French Revolution which brought the system into being. In Great Britain, however, it has been associated with the aggressiveness of this Revolution and of Napoleon, and, later, with the aggressive militarism of Prussia. After the war, therefore, it was one of the objectives which Lloyd George set for himself, to abolish universal compulsory military service. This policy was actively supported by the British people, who felt about it as strongly as their forefathers of post-Napoleonic days had felt about slavery. The

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference, Series X, p. 70.*

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movement in Great Britain for abolition of conscription influenced British insistence on the limitation of trained reserves just as their belief in the essentially democratic character of the institution influenced the French on the same issue.

If, in the case of trained reserves, the feeling about conscription strengthened the strategic considerations, the opposite was true regarding the limitation of land war material. British strategic considerations demanded the direct limitation of land war material. Such limitation, however, necessitated strict supervision, as experience with Germany had already shown. The British attitude had always been to rely on good faith as the only effective control in international obligations. In the Third Committee of the Second Assembly, on September 28, 1921, Mr. H. A. L. Fisher stated that the British Government had never viewed with favour any proposal for exercising the right of control over the limitation of armaments. Such a scheme would be likely to create difficulties between the States.¹ In Sub-Commission A, the British experts had expressed themselves strongly against any form of organized supervision of armaments. They were

"firmly of the opinion that any form of supervision or control of armaments by an international body is more calculated to foment ill-will and suspicion between States than to foster international confidence. . . ."²

They were therefore "entirely unable to accept for their own Government anything in the nature of itinerant inquisitorial commissions."³ These commissions, however, were more necessary if direct limitation of material were adopted. As the disadvantages of investigating commissions appeared to be greater than the strategical advantages to be derived from direct limitation of material, the British Government renounced direct limitation of material in order not to have to accept international supervision.⁴

¹ *Records of the Second Assembly, Minutes of Committees*, p. 335.

² *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Report of Sub-Commission A, pp. 161-162.

³ *Ibid.*, Report of Sub-Commission A, pp. 167-168.

⁴ Cf. Statement of Lord Cushendun in the Preparatory Commission, May 3, 1929. *Ibid.*, Series VIII, p. 174.

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In its draft convention presented to the third session of the Preparatory Commission the British Government provided that any Power was entitled, if it suspected some other Power of not carrying out the Convention, to bring up the case before the Council of the League of Nations to which would be joined representatives of the United States. This body could order an investigation, but no Commission of Inquiry could be sent into the territory of any Power without its consent. This provision was that contained in Article 11 of the Covenant applied to disarmament. During the discussion on supervision and control Lord Cecil remarked of the British proposals for supervision:

"I believe that they will give a very large measure of satisfaction in regard to the difficulties which are felt in the matter, and I am quite sure that my Government would find it very difficult to go any farther than some such proposition."¹

In the second part of the sixth session the whole problem was referred to a sub-committee whose recommendations were adopted by the Preparatory Commission and included in the Draft Convention. These recommendations provided for the establishment of a Permanent Disarmament Commission meeting yearly to perform certain duties in connection with the Convention. One of these duties was the investigation of complaints by gathering information and the publication of reports for action by the several Governments. This proposal was essentially that of the British Government, as no compulsory control authority was set up but merely the investigation already provided for in the Covenant of the League.

The attitude of the British Government in the Preparatory Commission at first had this in common with every other Government—it advocated the methods of limiting land armaments which left it the greatest strategic freedom while limiting the freedom of others. To strategic considerations were added political or social considerations which strengthened or weakened them as the case might be. The desire to abolish conscription rein-

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series IV, pp. 278-279.

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forced the desire to limit trained reserves, while the objections to strict supervision were sufficiently potent to overcome the desire to limit directly land war material. As in the case of naval armaments, a compromise was reached in the Draft Convention whereby the greatest strategic freedom was left to all Parties.

The British Government abandoned its original point of view on the limitation of land armaments in favour of the French point of view. The British Army was too insignificant in European diplomacy to permit the British to insist upon the acceptance of their views. They could do this only at the cost of concessions on other points of more importance to them. Stricter limitations of French land armaments could be purchased only at the cost of military commitments in Europe and very strict international control of disarmament provisions. The British Government had already gone as far as it could in the way of military commitments in the Locarno Treaties, and any provision for investigation in England by an international supervisory body was distasteful. After the first clash of conceptions of disarmament in Sub-Commission A and the third session of the Preparatory Commission, the British Government gave way, leaving it to the predominant military Power to dictate the methods of limiting land armaments.

The World Disarmament Conference, February 2, 1932—?

The Draft Convention was well received in Great Britain. The Imperial Conference of 1930 approved of the principles underlying it and was satisfied that its provisions "afforded an adequate basis for an effective system of disarmament."¹ The British Government had already reduced the Army to such low figures that it felt it could not go further unilaterally. Nevertheless, it welcomed the calling of the World Disarmament Conference and stated in the House of Commons that it intended to take a leading part in the limitation of land forces. On March 24, 1930, the Secretary of State for War, Mr. Shaw, declared that while the

¹ Cmd. 3717 of 1930, p. 39.

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Government was willing not merely to take part in international arrangements for drastic reductions in armaments, but to take the lead in negotiations, it was not prepared at the moment to go further in unilateral disarmament.¹ The following year, on March 10, 1931, he repeated the same policy:

“The Government will take a leading part and make actual proposals for a diminution of land forces. We have done everything that we can to bring about the day when, by international agreement, armaments will be reduced all over the world. All that we shall continue to do; but at the present moment it is absolutely impossible for us to propose any further diminution in the numbers. That is why the numbers which are proposed in these Estimates remain as they were last year. I repeat there are certain things the Government will not do. They will not attempt compulsion; they will not attempt in any way any form of compulsion that will lead to a militarized army. At the same time, they will not propose any further unilateral disarmament, but will pursue the method of inducing other nations to come to an agreement which will allow this country and other countries to remove from their shoulders the military burdens which they now bear.”²

The British Government recognized that France was the military centre of gravity of post-war Europe and that any successful limitation of armaments depended upon her. The French Government had repeatedly maintained that the three fighting services were interdependent and that limitation of one was impossible without limitation of the others. Moreover, France demanded security as *conditio sine qua non* of agreement to a disarmament convention. In order to reach some reduction or limitation of land armaments at the Disarmament Conference, it was therefore necessary to arrive at a general convention limiting all armaments with provisions ensuring that the military superiority of France would be maintained through foreign aid in case of necessity. While the British Government was anxious to fulfil its international obligations to reduce its armaments, it recognized that the special position of France might make this difficult. In his speech in the House of Commons on June 29, 1931, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald considered the case of invaded France.

¹ 237 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 82.

² 249 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1020.

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"Therefore, while we give our figures and ask for our agreements, and beg for our agreements, and negotiate our agreements, do not let us lose that sympathetic touch which is bound to keep France and us together so long as we have the proper imagination to see what a Frenchman feels and, above all, what a Frenchwoman feels when war is talked about and disarmament is being negotiated."¹

The consideration by the British Government of the French position did not involve acceptance of any new commitments. Besides the general obligations undertaken in the Covenant and in the Kellogg Pact the British Government had already guaranteed the Rhine frontier of France against unprovoked aggression on the part of Germany and *vice versa*. This, it had undertaken jointly with Italy. The French situation, however, was more complex than was implied in the Locarno Treaties. In the first place, invasion could still take place through Switzerland, in which event there were no guarantees except those of the Covenant and the guaranteed neutrality of Switzerland. In the second place, there was no special guarantee of the maintenance of the political equilibrium in Eastern and Central Europe. Germany had refused to recognize this equilibrium. A change in it could only result in a stronger Germany which would be a perpetual menace to France. The security of France, therefore, required the maintenance of the existing equilibrium of power, not only in Western but also in Eastern and Central Europe. While cognizant of this situation, the British Government would assume no commitments other than those it had already undertaken. Mr. Eden made this clear in the General Commission on February 3, 1933:

"My Government conceives that in its membership of the League of Nations and its signature of the Locarno Treaties it has gone as far as it could and should in assuming definite commitment in Europe."²

The situation was further complicated by the demand of Germany for equality of rights in armaments. Already during

¹ 254 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 919.

² *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Minutes of the General Commission, II, p. 223.

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the debates of the Preparatory Commission the German representative had insisted that his Government be granted an equality of treatment in methods of reducing armaments. The Allies had agreed to disarm after they had disarmed Germany. The German Government now demanded the fulfilment of this obligation in the same manner in which the disarmament of Germany had been carried out. The Preparatory Commission had not recognized this argument for equality of treatment, and, after drafting methods of limiting armaments different from those contained in Part V of the Treaty of Versailles, it had included in the Draft Convention an article providing for the continuance in full force of existing treaties. The German demand for equality of rights in armaments was directly in opposition to French insistence upon the maintenance of the existing military inequality between France and Germany. Germany desired to change the political equilibrium of the Treaties of Peace while France desired to maintain it. The problem facing the World Disarmament Conference was, therefore, to ensure the military superiority of France in case of unprovoked aggression, in a political system giving equality of rights in armaments to Germany and, at the same time, placing Germany in such a position that it would be impossible for her to upset the equilibrium.

With this political situation looming in the background but not clearly defined, the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments held its first meeting at Geneva on February 2, 1932. From the first meeting of the Conference the two problems of security and equality of rights in armaments haunted the discussions without being directly dealt with. In the general discussion, while the French and other delegations stressed the need for security before a disarmament convention was signed, the German delegation and those of the other disarmed countries insisted that the inequality of rights in armaments had lost its *raison d'être*. Each group demanded that the political principle it advocated should be accepted before anything else was agreed upon. Both France and Germany, however, hesitated to broach the subjects directly in public debate for fear that, once atti-

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tudes were publicly taken, it would be too difficult to arrive at a solution satisfactory to them. After placing the principles of security and equality of rights on the agenda of the Conference to be dealt with in the future, the Conference occupied itself with other subjects and negotiations on the political equilibrium which should have taken place before the Conference was convened were carried on in private.

Opening the general discussion on February 8, Sir John Simon laid down the policy of the British Government. It still conceived of disarmament as the means to security. "The security which we set before us as our ideal is security for all, and security for all fundamentally depends on armaments reduction."¹ There were two ways of limiting armaments: by setting maximum quantitative limits and by qualitative limitation or abolition of certain instruments or methods of warfare. Both these methods required some kind of supervision to control the limitations effected. The British Government favoured these two methods of limitation together with control provisions. Sir John summarized the provisions he advocated as follows:

"We accept, as the basis of our future discussion, the general scheme of the draft Disarmament Convention. We accept, in general, the methods of limitation by reference to the establishment of maxima contained in that Convention. We accept and support the proposal for the establishment of a Permanent Disarmament Commission. We urge the abolition of gas and chemical warfare. . . . The abolition of conscription is, as we realize, a subject with controversial aspects, but we seek and we urge upon others to seek and to help us to find the most practical course for limiting by agreement the number of effectives. We take the view that the temptation to resort to armed conflict is obviously reduced if defence is strengthened at the expense of attack. And, since our common object is not to increase but to diminish the sum total of armaments and their expense, it follows that we must direct especial attention to such prohibitions or limitations as will weaken the attack and so remove temptation from aggression . . . we, the British delegation, are ready to co-operate . . . in any practical

¹ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, Verbatim Records of Plenary Meetings, I, p. 57.*

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application of the principle of prohibiting land guns above a certain calibre.”¹

The definite proposals of the British Government were contained in a memorandum presented to the Conference on February 22, 1932. While maintaining the Draft Convention as the groundwork on which the Conference should proceed, the United Kingdom delegation suggested, in order to impose limitations which would weaken attack, the study of

- “1. The most practical course for limiting the number of effectives;
- “2. The prohibition of mobile land guns above a certain calibre.”

It also attached great “importance to the maintenance of the provisions of the Draft Convention relating to gas and bacteriological warfare, and of those providing for the establishment of a Permanent Disarmament Commission.”²

In formulating these proposals the British Government bore its own interests in mind. Its effectives were reduced to a point where they were almost negligible. The limitation of effectives was, therefore, essentially the disarmament of others. The same was true with regard to large land guns. Modern development had brought England within the range of large guns operating from the coast of Flanders. Heavy artillery thus constituted a threat to her with no compensating advantage, for, in her “small wars,” Great Britain had no use for large guns. Technical development, moreover, was away from large artillery in favour of smaller motorized units which could be transported and displaced easily. Heavy artillery had been developed, in a static war, to overcome the trench and the machine gun. The present trend of military thought was toward increasing mobility and this militated against the use of heavy artillery.

The proposal regarding gas and bacteriological warfare called merely for the maintenance of the *status quo*. This kind of warfare had been prohibited in many diplomatic instruments since the

¹ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, Verbatim Records of Plenary Meetings, I, p. 59.*

² *Ibid.*, Conference Documents, I, p. 144.

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First Hague Conference of 1899 had agreed upon such prohibition. In spite of these, it had seen widespread use during the World War, and the prohibition had been renewed in the Treaty of Versailles. At the Washington Conference a Treaty regulating the use of submarines and prohibiting the use of noxious gases in warfare was signed on February 6, 1922. It never came into force due to the failure of France to ratify. The Third Assembly (1922) had recommended to the Governments to adhere to the Treaty of Washington. The following year the Temporary Mixed Commission instructed a committee to report on the probable effects of the chemical weapon in the event of war. This report was published at the request of the 1924 Assembly. A Protocol limiting chemical warfare was signed in the International Conference for the Supervision of the Trade in Arms in 1925. By 1930 this Protocol had been ratified by twenty-six countries.

The attitude of the British has always been to condemn gas warfare. Since the war, however, they have acted on the principle that, in case of another war, gas will be used by the other belligerents and they must be ready to meet such action. Laying down the post-war policy in this matter, on February 21, 1920, the report of the Department of the Imperial General Staff read:

"So long as there is any danger of other nations continuing these methods of warfare, research and experiment in chemical warfare must be pressed.

"Research must not only be directed towards the gases and apparatus likely to be employed in the future, but also towards protection against all possible gases. Training in the use of gas will be continued to appropriate branches but training in defensive measures will include the whole army."¹

Accordingly, in November 1920, the War Office constituted, as part of the new peace-time organization, a committee for chemical warfare research and experiment. The object of the committee was "the development to the utmost extent of both the offensive and defensive aspects of chemical warfare."²

¹ Cmd. 565 of 1920, p. 5.

² *The Times*, November 8, 1920.

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In the first session of the Preparatory Commission, Lord Cecil had suggested limitation of instruments for the use of gas in the field as a method of limiting the amount of gas which would be used.¹ After examining the problem, Sub-Commission A stated that ordinary methods of control or reduction were illusory and of no value. A sub-committee of chemical experts appointed by Sub-Commission B reviewed all solutions and recommended the international co-operation of chemical industries in enforcing pledges not to use or manufacture asphyxiating gases. In the third session of the Preparatory Commission the Belgian, Polish, Rumanian, Czechoslovak, and Serb-Croat-Slovene delegations proposed an article to the Draft Convention binding each Signatory to abstain from use in war of chemical and bacteriological methods and from preparation in peace-time for the use of such methods, and to prohibit the importation, exportation, and manufacture of substances used for such warfare. Discussion on this proposal was postponed until the second reading. It was considered in the first part of the sixth session. The undertaking to abstain from use of chemical and bacteriological methods of warfare was accepted without dissent. Lord Cushendun, however, objected to the other provisions because of the difficulty of separating the substances used for chemical warfare from those used for commercial purposes. This objection raised the difficulty inherent in any proposal for strict regulation and control of the material for chemical warfare. Since no such control could be instituted without seriously regulating and impeding the development of a "key" industry, agreement was reached only on prohibition of the use of chemical and bacteriological warfare. The Draft Convention merely repeated the declaration of the Protocol of 1925.

During the general discussion in the World Disarmament Conference, which lasted from February 8th to 24th, there was unanimous opinion that chemical and bacteriological warfare should continue to be prohibited. There was also very widespread

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series II, p. 22.

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adhesion to the principle of qualitative limitation of armaments—the idea of the abolition or serious reduction of “aggressive” armaments contained in Sir John Simon’s speech of February 8th. This idea was inherent in the disarmament of Germany when certain weapons were forbidden to her because they were not necessary for defence and because they were particularly “offensive.” The qualitative limitations imposed on naval armaments in the Treaties of Washington and London had been so imposed to prevent building competition and not because of the “offensiveness” of the forbidden weapons.¹ Exception might be made of the limitations in the size of submarines. The conception of limiting “offensive” armaments was again found at the basis of the work of the Preparatory Commission. The French proposal that the questions be studied by the Preparatory Commission, which was submitted to the Committee of the Council on December 5, 1925, suggested the study of the possibility of differentiating between “offensive” and “defensive” armaments. It was included as the fourth of the questions submitted by the Council to guide the work of the Preparatory Commission.²

In the first session of the Preparatory Commission, on May 19, 1926, Lord Cecil expressed himself clearly on this point. He said:

“I myself think that from a point of view of disarmament it is exceedingly difficult to distinguish between offensive and defensive armaments, because, apart from actual fixed defensives (fortifications and things of that kind), any armaments, however defensively established, may be used for offensive purposes. I should have thought that, subject to any advice we might receive from Sub-Commission A, the answer was quite plain—that there was, from the point of view of disarmament, no distinction between offensive and defensive armaments apart from fixed defensives.”³

After examining the problem Sub-Commission A reached the same conclusion.

¹ At the Geneva Conference Mr. Bridgeman drew a difference between 8-inch gun and 6-inch gun cruisers as “offensive” and “defensive” cruisers.

² *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series I.

³ *Ibid.*, Series II, p. 32.

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"Generally speaking . . . any component elements of armaments, which are incapable of mobility by means of self-contained power or can only be transported after a long delay, can only be used for the defence of the territory in which they are erected."¹

If, however, the available quantity of up-to-date material and the immediately available trained effectives were small, the military forces might be considered more "defensive." On this principle the Preparatory Commission proceeded to examine the limitation of immediately available effectives and material. Although recurring in the debates, the principle of qualitative limitation was not clearly defined in the Draft Convention, as it would have been impossible to do so without setting figures, which was beyond the powers of the Commission.

The principle of qualitative limitation reappeared in the general discussion of the Disarmament Conference and many delegations proposed the abolition of all land artillery above a certain calibre and of tanks. The first task of the General Commission of the Disarmament Conference, after the closing of the general discussion, was to organize these various proposals and co-ordinate them with the Draft Convention which the General Commission decided to make the basis of its work. These proposals were put in concrete form in the resolution presented by Mr. Gibson on April 11, 1932, in which the General Commission expressed the belief "that the abolition of aggressive weapons would constitute a first and essential requisite" of the reduction of armaments and the establishment of security, and resolved that tanks, mobile guns, and gases were particularly aggressive and should therefore be abolished, and that the Land Commission should submit a plan for scrapping tanks and mobile guns exceeding 155 mm. in calibre, and for the abolition of the use of gases in war. Sir John Simon supported Mr. Gibson's proposal. Heavy mobile guns—of 155-mm. or 6.2-inch calibre—were particularly weapons of sudden aggressive attack. Heavy tanks were also weapons specially designed for the assault of prepared positions.

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Report of Sub-Commission A, p. 141.

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Regarding land armaments, Sir John summarized the British position:

“Indeed, he might remind the Commission that his Government had already pronounced for the abolition by international agreement of the heavy mobile land gun as well as of gas and chemical warfare, and his statement at the present meeting brought the heavy tank into the same list.”¹

The proposal for qualitative limitation, which was fully in accord with Part V of the Treaty of Versailles, did not meet with French approval. On February 5th, before the opening of the general discussion, the French delegation had issued a memorandum providing for security by organizing peace and placing at the disposal of the League of Nations certain armed forces which would be used as police force. According to this memorandum, heavy long-range artillery might be retained only by those Powers who undertook to place it at the disposal of the League, but these Powers were granted the right to use these heavy guns for their own defence. By this method the French Government could keep, after placing the label “international” on them, all the large land guns which at this time ensured her military superiority over Germany. In the general discussion and in the discussion of Mr. Gibson’s resolution the French delegation maintained the view expressed in its memorandum. The principle of Mr. Gibson’s proposal was included in a broader resolution presented by Sir John Simon, on April 20th, in which the Conference declared its approval of the principle of qualitative disarmament, prohibiting the possession of certain classes of weapons by any State. To meet the French objections, Sir John, two days later, modified his resolution to place side by side prohibition of possession and internationalization of certain weapons. This resolution was accepted unanimously and the General Commission instructed the technical Commissions to submit a report on the “aggressive” armaments to be abolished or internationalized.

¹ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Minutes of the General Commission, I, p. 43.

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The Land Commission was no more successful in finding "aggressive" weapons than the Naval Commission had been. It came to the conclusion that artillery could be both offensive and defensive, but that its offensive character increased with the increase in its power and its range. The Commission, however, could not agree at what point artillery was most particularly defensive. Some delegations placed it at a calibre of 77 to 100 mm.; others at 155 mm.; and still others at 220 mm. The British delegation advocated 155 mm. or approximately 6-inch as the maximum calibre to be allowed. This limit "excluded guns of a definite offensive character."¹ Every delegation sought to place the limit so as to retain the artillery with which it was well supplied and to abolish that in which it was comparatively weak. The same determination was manifest in regard to armoured fighting vehicles. Certain delegations favoured the abolition of all tanks. Others wanted to abolish tanks exceeding certain tonnage. This tonnage was fixed at various figures from 10 to 70 tons. The British delegation advocated 25 tons because the British Army leads in the development, tactical and constructional, of medium and light tanks, that is tanks under 20 tons. Throughout these discussions, it became evident that the weapons in which each nation was proficient were defensive, while those possessed by its neighbours were offensive. Major-General Fuller summarized the discussions somewhat caustically:

"Weapons are to be catalogued as aggressive and non-aggressive and such like humbug. Why all this hypocrisy and hair-splitting scholasticism? Because it forms an admirable smoke cloud under cover of which the nations can manoeuvre into strategic position for the next war."²

In view of the negative report of the Land Commission, it was clear that some delegation had to take the initiative in proposing something if the General Commission were not to register

¹ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Minutes of the Land Commission, April 27, 1932, p. 12.

² Fuller, F. J. C., "War and Western Civilization," *Nineteenth Century and After*, 115, p. 401.

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a *non possumus* on the qualitative limitation of land armaments. This initiative was taken by the American delegation on June 22, 1932. Mr. Gibson read a series of propositions presented by President Hoover to form the basis of the Disarmament Convention. President Hoover proposed abolition of all tanks, all chemical warfare, and all large mobile guns. Furthermore, he proposed a one-third reduction in the strength of all land armies over and above the "police component" which was to be calculated on the basis of the proportion of soldiers to the population allowed Germany and the other disarmed States. Necessary corrections would have to be made for countries with colonial possessions. The immediate reaction of Sir John Simon was that the British would give the proposals their sympathetic attention. The British Government, however, made known its views on President Hoover's declaration in a statement circulated to the members of the General Commission on July 7, 1932. After describing the reductions already made in its land armaments, the British Government came to the conclusion that the calculation of the "police component" on the basis suggested in the Hoover proposals would indicate "that the British land forces have already been reduced substantially below the number recognized to be necessary for the maintenance of internal order, without making any allowance for the forces needed for the lines of communication between the United Kingdom and the territories overseas."¹

The British Government agreed with the American proposal in the prohibition of chemical and bacteriological warfare and in the abolition of all mobile guns of a calibre greater than 155 mm. (6·1-inch calibre). Whereas the American proposal had contained no figure for the maximum calibre of guns, the British Government now introduced the figure it had advocated in the Land Commission and which best suited its national needs.

Consideration of national needs also impelled the British to reject the American proposal for the complete abolition of tanks.

¹ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Conference Documents, I, p. 266.

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The British Government renewed its proposal for the abolition of heavy tanks over 20 tons but insisted upon the maintenance of medium and light tanks. It had no desire to give up the use of these mechanized units because "in a small voluntarily enlisted army like our own, they constitute an essential compensation for lack of numbers which it would be impossible to surrender."¹ The cost of an increase in men and the difficulty of securing satisfactory recruits militated against the abolition of tanks.

The General Commission discussed the propositions of President Hoover and agreement was manifested on so many points that it was found possible to draft a resolution embodying the conclusions already arrived at and laying down the programme of the future work of the Conference when it should reconvene after the summer vacation. On the basis of a preliminary British draft and many private conversations, M. Beněs, Rapporteur of the General Commission, presented a resolution on July 20, 1932. This resolution listed the concrete measures of disarmament which should form part of the Convention to be drawn up and the points which called for further examination.

This resolution embodied the limitations of land artillery which had received general assent. All heavy land artillery of calibres between any maximum limit set for the different kinds of guns, coastal, fortress, and mobile, and a lower limit to be defined were to be limited in number. The limitation of calibre of land artillery was to be fixed by the Convention.

"Subject to an effective method being established to prevent the rapid transformation of guns on fixed mountings into mobile guns, different maxima for the calibre of land guns may be fixed as follows:

- "(a) A maximum limit for the calibre of coastal guns, which shall not be less than the maximum calibre of naval guns;
- "(b) A maximum limit for the calibre of guns in permanent frontier or fortress defensive systems;
- "(c) A maximum limit for the calibre of mobile land guns (other than guns employed for coastal defence)."²

¹ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Conference Documents, I, p. 266.

² *Ibid.*, Minutes of the General Commission, I, p. 154.

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These provisions did not solve the difficulty before the Commission, which was to set the figures. The stipulation for tanks, that their maximum unit tonnage should be limited, was only a repetition of the principle already agreed upon in April. There also the kernel of the problem was left unsettled. The provisions regarding chemical, bacteriological, and incendiary warfare and supervision were more positive and reflected definite agreement. A special committee to study the problem of chemical warfare from the qualitative point of view had reported in favour of complete prohibition of chemical, bacteriological, and incendiary warfare and the abolition of all engines, projectiles, etc., specially constructed for use in these methods of warfare.¹ This conclusion was incorporated in the Resolution. The Resolution approved the establishment of a Permanent Disarmament Commission such as that foreseen in the Draft Convention of the Preparatory Commission "with such extension of its powers as may be deemed by the Conference necessary to enable the Convention to be effectively applied." Strict limitation and real reduction of effectives was to be studied and the Bureau was invited to examine the proposals of President Hoover on this point. Examination of the problems of limitation of national defence expenditure was to continue. Finally, the Resolution provided that the Commission was to formulate rules of international law to embody the prohibition on chemical warfare and to supplement these by special measures dealing with infringement.

During the discussion of this resolution Sir Herbert Samuel voiced the necessity of reaching agreement on the limitation of national expenditure budgets. He made it plain, however, that Great Britain had already reduced her budgetary expenditures on armaments so considerably that her unilateral action had to be allowed for when fixing the figures. With this reservation, he was prepared to accept the resolution. Later, Sir John Simon accepted the resolution as containing the principles of limitation of armaments which had received general assent. The French delegation also supported the resolution, although the problem

¹ *Ser. L.o.N. Pub.*, 1932, IX, p. 46.

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of security had been left for future consideration. The German delegation, however, indicated its disagreement with the resolution because it did not contain a recognition of the principle of equality of rights. The German, therefore, voted against it when it was accepted on July 23, 1932. They announced that they would not continue to participate in the Conference unless the failure to recognize the principle of equality of rights should be remedied by private negotiations. The political problem which had hovered over the Conference since its inception and prevented the achievement of any real limitation of armaments was thus brought to the foreground and called for solution before the Conference could proceed.

The dilemma raised by the insistence of Germany upon equality of rights in armaments and the insistence of France upon security dominated the ensuing discussions of disarmament. Even after Germany had agreed to participate once more in the work of the Conference, the clash between the two views determined its fate. It was a fight for prestige: France to keep her relative position which ensured her security, and Germany to better her relative position so as to oppose France effectively in European politics. Sir John Simon made this clear in his explanation to the House of Commons on November 7, 1933. He said:

"The central political issue is how to reconcile Germany's demand for equality with France's desire for security. Regarded as a direct issue that is a question between those two Powers and their respective peoples. It is a terrible problem charged with the most potent and persistent of all historic influences which divide nations. That is memory—the memory of invasion on the one hand and the fear which it leaves behind, the memory of defeat on the other hand and the resentment and sense of humiliation which it engenders. Can anyone say that either sentiment is unnatural, and that in like circumstances we should not feel it ourselves? I do not think so, and for that reason the whole of British policy has been directed, not to denying or belittling either sentiment, but in the effort to promote reconciliation between them and to meet the supreme need of the world for peace by turning the minds of both from the past and inviting their co-operation in the future."¹

¹ 281 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 58.

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The part played by Great Britain in the Franco-German clash of national interests was that of mediator. The policy of the British Government regarding land armaments had been to accept whatever proposals met with general assent. In the first part of the sixth session of the Preparatory Commission Lord Cushendun had stated that the British Government would leave to the Continental Military Powers the task of limiting land armaments. The British followed the same policy in the Disarmament Conference. The organization of their army placed them in a separate position. They defended their own interests whenever there was no general agreement, but where such agreement could be obtained they made concessions. British policy as mediator in the Franco-German clash was to seek a political equilibrium which would ensure peace and permit the limitation of land armaments. On such limitation depended the limitation of air and naval armaments, both of which were of great importance to Great Britain.

The period which followed the July resolution of the General Commission was one of continued diplomatic interchanges between the European Great Powers seeking a formula which would satisfy both France and Germany. An exchange of notes between Germany and France laid down the contradictory theses. The Bureau of the Conference was convened for September 21, 1932, and on September 12th the President of the Conference received a note from Berlin informing him that since private negotiations had as yet produced no settlement of the question of equality of rights, no representative of Germany would attend the forthcoming meeting. On September 18, 1932, the British Government published a statement of its views. It denied the legal right of Germany to demand disarmament of the Allies in the same way in which Germany was disarmed and the right to rearm unless this or any other disarmament were carried out, but it accepted in substance the legal obligation of the Allies to disarm and the moral case of Germany to insist upon equality of rights in disarmament. It conceived the object of the Conference to be the drafting of a convention to be freely entered into which would grant substantial equality of status. But such a convention

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could be attained only by negotiations within the Conference. As a result of private negotiations during the Assembly the British Government, on October 4th, issued an invitation to Germany and France to confer with Great Britain with a view to settling the outstanding difficulties. Diplomatic differences delayed this meeting until December 1932.

In October the French Government elaborated a plan of disarmament in which the thesis of security was developed in a system implicitly recognizing equality of rights in armaments. This plan was outlined to the French Chamber of Deputies on October 28, 1932, and to the General Commission on November 4th, and published in full on November 14th. To ensure security it proposed that a breach of the Pact of Paris should be regarded as a matter of interest to all Powers, give rise to consultation between them on the measures to be taken, and involve the economic and financial isolation of the aggressor country and the non-recognition of the *de facto* situation resulting therefrom. After stressing the importance of Article 16 of the Covenant, the French Government proposed political undertakings in Europe for mutual assistance in case of aggression and the peaceful settlement of international disputes. Together with these political undertakings, the land forces in the home territory of each Continental European country were to be reduced to a uniform general type of a "national short-service army with limited effectives." All powerful mobile material was to be prohibited. This material and special troops were to be placed at the disposal of the League of Nations as a contingent for joint action, but could also be used by the States for self-defence. These provisions would be supervised regularly and permanently, and formed, with the naval and air provisions, "an indivisible whole."¹

The new French plan was inspired by the Tardieu plan of February 5, 1932, but it introduced a new element in the proposed division of security undertakings into three classes so as to win American and British adhesion. Moreover, it tried to meet

¹ *Ser. L.o.N. Pub.*, 1932, IX, p. 58.

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German demands on equality of rights by the reorganization of land forces on a universal short-service basis. In the debates in the House of Commons on November 10, 1932, Sir John Simon welcomed the French plan as a step forward to meet German demands and supported the European pact of non-aggression, as it did not involve Great Britain in any new commitments. He then made a declaration of the policy of the British Government on equality which was reproduced in the declaration of November 17th before the General Commission. In this declaration the British Government favoured granting equality of rights to Germany, but, in order to remove possible dangers to the peace of Europe, this should be accompanied by a solemn affirmation of all European States that they would not "attempt to resolve any present or future differences between them by resort to force." With this assurance the British Government advocated that German claims should be met by (a) including the limitations of Germany's armaments in the General Disarmament Convention; (b) making these limitations subject to the same period of duration and methods of revision; (c) conceding the right to equality in kinds of war material without this concession being made a cause for rearmament. These principles, to be carried out by stages, could only be agreed upon and applied in discussions at Geneva with Germany as a party.¹

In an explanatory note the British Government showed how the principle of equality of rights might be applied in a disarmament convention. It renewed its proposal for the abolition of heavy tanks, but insisted once again that light tanks formed an indispensable protection to a small army. Recognition of the principle of equality of treatment made it impossible to deny to Germany the right to possess light tanks, but the question of whether this should be so in practice and the number to be permitted was a point for further negotiations. Regarding large mobile guns, the British Government advocated reduction of the maximum calibre to the figures of the Versailles Treaty, namely 105 mm. It thereby abandoned its former insistence on the

¹ Cmd. 4189 of 1932. Cf. *supra*, p. 235.

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155-mm. gun. The quantitative application to land effectives of the principle of equality of rights was to involve no rearmament. The British Government was prepared to accept President Hoover's plan regarding land effectives. Really efficient and adequate supervision had to be accepted by all States represented at Geneva as an essential part of any disarmament convention.

The French plan and the British declaration of policy paved the way for the conversations between the five Powers, France, Great Britain, United States, Germany, and Italy, which were held in Geneva in the beginning of December. On December 11, 1932, the representatives of the five Powers agreed upon a declaration which laid down the principle that the Disarmament Convention should grant to Germany "equality of rights in a system which would provide for the security of all nations."¹ The political basis for a disarmament convention was thus clearly laid down, although the problem was not yet solved. To the French Government security still implied the assurance of military superiority over Germany in case of unprovoked aggression and the assurance that Germany would not overthrow the balance of power in Europe by expansion in Eastern Europe. Equality of rights in armaments, however, implied an equality of status with France in dictating the affairs of Europe and was not consistent with the subordination of Germany in any given political system. Although in German and French policy the principles of security and equality of rights clashed, in British policy they had always been closely connected. The opposition of the British Government to the French security programme had lain in the fact that this programme implied the maintenance of Germany in a perpetually subordinate status. The policy of the British Government, after the December declaration, therefore, was to strive to harmonize the German and French demands and to establish an equilibrium of power in Europe which would give to Germany the status she desired in a system of mutual security, and thereby guarantee to France the predominance of force she demanded in case of unprovoked aggression.

¹ *Vide supra*, p. 237.

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Discussion of the French plan occupied the meetings of the General Commission from February 2 to 8, 1933, and was followed by a detailed examination of the questionnaire on effectives drawn up to put in practice the French plan for the standardization of Continental European Armies. On February 13th the General Commission adopted a recommendation of the Bureau to undertake immediately the study of the questions in the order submitted by the British delegation in a memorandum of January 30, 1933. Accordingly, a discussion of the problem of effectives was begun on February 16th, which lasted until March 6th. This discussion proved more and more fruitless, and the General Commission was all but overwhelmed by technical minutiae. The various problems of land disarmament were so interrelated that they could not be treated in isolation. What was needed was a whole convention with figures showing the concessions to be made by each country. After discussion in the British Cabinet, Mr. MacDonald went to Geneva in March 1933, and on the 16th presented a complete Draft Convention to the General Commission to serve as guide for discussion.

The British Draft Convention attacked the kernel of the problem—land armaments—on the basis of the French plan for the gradual unification of effectives together with progressive destruction of large war material. The principle applied for the limitation of effectives was a gradual standardization of the armies of Continental Europe on the basis of the army with short-term service and limited effectives. The number of effectives in the land armed forces were to be limited (see table on p. 312). The maximum period of service for effectives in the land armed forces stationed at home could not exceed eight months although a longer period of service could be allowed for overseas troops. The reduction or increase in the average daily effectives was to take place gradually over a period of five years, the life of the Convention.

The standardization of military organization was offset by the gradual destruction of heavy material. The maximum calibre of mobile land guns was placed at 105 mm. or 4.5 inches calibre,

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although existing guns up to 155 mm. could be retained but not replaced. The maximum limit for coastal defence guns was set at 406 mm. The maximum limit for tanks was 16 tons. All guns above 155 mm. and tanks above 16 tons were to be destroyed, one-third within twelve months and two-thirds within three years of the coming into force of the Convention. Guns above 105 mm. should be destroyed as soon as they were replaced by guns of or

		Stationed in the Home Country	Total, including Overseas
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	..	500,000	500,000
France	.. .. .	200,000	400,000
Italy	.. .. .	200,000	250,000
Germany	.. .. .	200,000	200,000
Poland	.. .. .	200,000	200,000
Rumania	.. .. .	150,000	150,000
Spain	.. .. .	120,000	170,000
Czechoslovakia	.. .. .	100,000	100,000
Jugoslavia	.. .. .	100,000	100,000
Belgium	.. .. .	60,000	75,000
Bulgaria	.. .. .	60,000	60,000
Greece	.. .. .	60,000	60,000
Hungary	.. .. .	60,000	60,000
Portugal	.. .. .	50,000	60,000
Netherlands	.. .. .	25,000	75,000
Each other Continental European State	..	—	50,000

below this calibre. Budgetary limitation was omitted because the Committee on the Limitation of National Expenditure had not yet reported.

Besides these provisions on the most vital problem, the British Draft Convention repeated the security provisions of the French plan by providing for consultation in case of breach of the Pact of Paris and leaving room for regional treaties of mutual assistance. There were also detailed provisions regulating chemical warfare and supervision. These were taken from the recommendations of the committees appointed to study the problems. The use of

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chemical, incendiary, and bacteriological weapons was prohibited under reservation of legality of use for reprisals. All preparations for use of such weapons were prohibited and all complaints of violation were to be examined by the Permanent Disarmament Commission. This Commission was to be composed of the representatives of all Signatories and its task was to ensure the execution of the Convention and prepare for the next General Disarmament Conference. It was also to arrange for periodic supervision in the countries which agreed to such supervision.

After a general discussion which lasted four days the General Commission, on March 27, 1933, adopted the British Draft Convention as basis of discussion and adjourned the detailed survey of the Convention until April 25th. The survey of the proposals regarding land armaments revealed the same Franco-German clash of national interests which had influenced the discussion of effectives in February 1933. The French delegation insisted on the military reorganization of the *Reichswehr*, while the German delegation insisted upon equality of rights in the possession of war material and the destruction of offensive weapons. The Germans insisted on the limitation of trained reserves, and the French on the limitation of "para-military" organizations. The declaration of Mr. Norman Davis and the message of President Roosevelt in May 1933 helped to clear the ground on the question of security, but agreement on this was subject to the conclusion of a Disarmament Convention. The dominating factor, however, was the Franco-German diplomatic struggle for relative position in European affairs. The effort of Great Britain to arbitrate the conflict by giving concessions to both in a General Disarmament Convention did not prove successful. Although the British Convention was adopted on June 8th as the basis of the future Convention, the essential problem of striking the political equilibrium in Europe remained unsolved.

Private conversations were held in the autumn of 1933 to find a working compromise on land disarmament. On the basis of the decision to disarm by stages it was thought possible to carry out certain provisions of the British Draft Convention, such as

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the transformation of Continental armies, reduction in effectives, and international supervision, during a transitional period of three to four years after which the heavily armed Powers should disarm by the abandonment of "offensive" weapons, and equality in permitted weapons would be granted. Both stages were to be definitely provided for in the Convention. Germany, however, insisted upon being granted immediately the right to possess prototypes of the armaments to be permitted to her in the second stage of the Disarmament Convention. The French Government might have become reconciled to this had not the British delegation opposed it on account of military aviation. The Bureau met on October 9th and 14th. At this meeting Sir John Simon made a statement regarding the conversations which had been going on. On the same day Germany announced her withdrawal from the Conference and the League of Nations. The political issue determined once again the course of the Conference and the General Commission adjourned until some agreement could be reached among the interested parties.

Throughout these conversations and those which followed, the attitude of the British was dictated by the desire to reach a disarmament convention as a means of stabilizing the political situation and safeguarding the continued existence of peace. They had been ready to accept the modified proposal for the first stage of disarmament if it met with general assent.¹ The new defection of Germany did not deter them in their efforts to bring about some measure of disarmament. Their policy was laid down in the King's Speech opening Parliament, November 21, 1933:

"My Government will continue to co-operate with other Governments in endeavouring to reach a satisfactory solution of the complicated questions of disarmament in order to achieve a settlement acceptable to all and to attain fruitful results from the prolonged labours of the Disarmament Conference."²

In pursuance of this policy the British Government issued a memorandum on January 29, 1934, to show how agreement could

¹ 281 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 53.

² 283 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 7.

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be reached in a Convention involving the abandonment of certain classes of weapons by the most heavily armed Powers.

In this memorandum the British Government proposed to extend the provisions of its Draft Convention regarding the breach of the Pact of Paris to breaches of the Disarmament Convention. It approved, moreover, of the negotiation of pacts of non-aggression among European Powers. It showed its readiness to agree to Germany's having 300,000 men with twelve months' service—figures put forward by Germany in a communication to the French Government, on the understanding that other nations would not reduce their effectives—if this met with general assent. It called for the abolition of "para-military" troops. Germany was to be allowed to increase her permitted war material and to have anti-aircraft guns. Tanks above 30 tons were to be destroyed by the end of the first year of the Convention; those over 20 tons by the end of the third year. The whole problem of tanks was to be considered by the Permanent Disarmament Commission before the end of the third year, but until then Germany could have tanks up to 6 tons. The British Government was also ready to allow Germany guns up to 155 mm. in calibre while guns over 350 mm. were to be destroyed by the end of the first year, over 220 mm. by the end of the fourth year, and over 155 mm. by the end of the seventh year. Permanent and automatic supervision was also to be generally agreed upon.¹

In the discussion of this memorandum in the House of Commons on February 6, 1934, Sir John Simon explained that equality of rights must be granted and that in the existing situation this could take place only with some measure of rearmament of Germany. The British Government would agree only to a solution which provided some disarmament of the heavily armed Powers. During February Mr. Eden visited Paris, Rome, and Berlin to exchange views with the various chancellories and to try to secure adhesion to the new British proposals. The French reply to the British memorandum, on March 19, 1934, made it clear that France could not accept the demand for rearmament of Germany

¹ Cmd. 4498 and Cmd. 4512 of 1934.

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as equitable so long as sufficient security provisions were not made. More than consultation was needed. In a letter to the French Ambassador, on April 10th, Sir John Simon asked for the French Government's views whether, on basis of "guarantees of execution," France would accept the British proposals of January 29th as modified by conversations between Hitler and Eden and what was the nature of the required "guarantees of execution." The French reply of April 17, 1934, merely stressed the fact that the new German budget made security all the more necessary.¹

After receipt of this reply the British Government resigned itself to the fact that the political difference between France and Germany could not be composed and that the Disarmament Conference could not, therefore, come to a successful conclusion. The meeting of the General Commission which had been postponed since the fall of 1933 was held at the end of May 1934. Making a last stand for a Disarmament Convention, Sir John Simon, on May 30, 1934, suggested in the General Commission that a limited convention on chemical warfare, budgetary publicity, and the Permanent Disarmament Commission might be accepted. This did not solve the main issue, but furnished a base on which to continue at a more opportune moment. Sir John

"summed up the position of the United Kingdom Government by declaring that while there could be no justification for going on in a spirit of pious and undefined optimism, there was the most urgent need for deciding immediately what could be done and doing it without delay."²

The difficulty of reconciling security and equality of rights threatened to cause immediate adjournment of the Conference. After many conversations, however, the French delegation, on June 6, 1934, presented a resolution to the Bureau which was adopted by the General Commission on June 8th. The resolution left the Bureau the task of recommending solutions to existing problems, named a special committee on security to facilitate the conclusion of new pacts, set up a commission to study "guaran-

¹ Cmd. 4559 of 1934.

² *Conf. D./C.G./P.V.*, 83, p. 5.

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tees of execution" and control, asked the aerial committee to continue discussion on the propositions of the Resolution of July 23, 1932, and instituted a special committee to study the manufacture and commerce in arms. After thus providing for continuance of the work the General Commission adjourned *sine die*, leaving the Bureau to complete the measures necessary for a Convention.

The World Disarmament Conference has failed so far to arrive at a Disarmament Convention because the fundamental political problem has not been solved. Despite protracted negotiations it has been impossible to strike a political equilibrium in Europe which would give satisfaction to the German demand for equality with France in dictating European affairs and the French insistence upon the maintenance of security. France has been unwilling to recognize Germany's right to possession of powerful weapons which would serve as means of diplomatic pressure for the revision of territorial settlements. French security has been built up on a margin of military strength and the maintenance of post-war Germany in a subordinate position in European affairs. The principle of equality of status inevitably clashes with this conception of security. The solution lies in the striking of such a balance of power in Europe as will ensure the security of France in a political system giving equality of status to Germany while, at the same time, placing Germany in a position where she would be unable to upset the equilibrium. The British Government has made sincere efforts to arrive at this solution and will not be daunted by failure, because the maintenance of a satisfactory balance of power in Europe is absolutely necessary to British security.

CHAPTER V

BRITISH ATTITUDE ON AIR DISARMAMENT

ALTHOUGH aerial navigation was in its embryonic stage and there was no anticipation of future development, the subject of aerial warfare came up before the Hague Peace Conference of 1899. Along with other methods of warfare which were judged barren of possibilities, aerial bombardment was considered with a view to prohibition. Without much difficulty, a declaration was agreed upon prohibiting between the Signatories for a term of five years "the discharge of projectiles and explosives from balloons or by other new methods of similar nature." This declaration was signed by twenty-four nations, most of which ratified. Before the Second Hague Conference had met in 1907, the Wright brothers with their aeroplane and Count Zeppelin with his dirigible had opened up vast possibilities in aerial navigation. When, at the Second Hague Conference, the declaration on the discharge of projectiles from balloons was again proposed, the Great Powers manifested unwillingness to bind themselves to abstain from a method of warfare for which the future held such possibilities. The British Government, however, maintained that the development of aerostatics for use in war should be stopped in its incipiency. In the fifth meeting of the first sub-commission of the Second Commission, on August 7, 1907, Lord Reay said:

"I am firmly convinced that the Conference must act while there is yet time. Of what use will our efforts be to lessen the suffering caused by war if we call into being a new scourge, more terrible in its effects than the instruments whose field of action we seek to limit."¹

A British amendment extending the duration of the provision against aerial bombing until after the Third Peace Conference was accepted and the amended provision was passed on August 17,

¹ *Proceedings of the Hague Peace Conferences*, Conference of 1907, III, p. 148. Cf. Royse, M. W., *Aerial Bombardment and the International Regulation of Warfare*.

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1907. As France, Germany, and Russia were opposed to this measure, it had little value. The nations, however, adopted laws of war forbidding the discharge of explosives from un-directed and unpiloted aircraft and from all aircraft on unfortified towns, etc.

The war of 1914-1918 gave impetus to the development of aerial navigation. Both aeroplanes and airships were developed in enormous quantities to carry on hostilities. In spite of the Hague Conventions, bombing was the chief activity of aircraft during the war. British aircraft dropped 7,945 tons of bombs from July 1, 1916, to November 11, 1918.¹ In the course of the war the German airships and aeroplanes made 107 bombing raids over Great Britain, of which 32 included London, and in which they dropped nearly 9,000 bombs weighing 280 tons and resulting in the death of 1,413 persons and the injury of 3,407.² These raids brought into being a vast anti-aircraft organization for the defence of London which mustered over 30,000 men and 300 aeroplanes. While this organization was able, by 1916, to deal effectively with airship raids, it could not prevent aeroplane raids, although it did lessen their effectiveness. These raids caused no more proportionate casualties than did the bombardments from the sea by war vessels,³ but they affected the morale of the people and aroused them to the dangers of air bombardment.

Before the war there was no independent Air Force in Great Britain. The Royal Flying Corps was created in May 1912. It was a joint service with military and naval wings co-ordinated by a Joint Air Committee. As the air operations which were possible at that time were ancillary to naval or military operations each branch carried on its own experimentation and organization. At the beginning of the war the Royal Naval Air Service mustered 50 officers and 550 other ranks with 93 machines. The Royal Flying Corps had 147 officers and 1,097 other ranks with 179

¹ Cmd. 100 of 1919.

² *Military Effort of the British Empire during the War, 1914-1920*, pp. 676-678.

³ If the casualties, killed and wounded, of the twelve bombardments are taken as a base, the proportionate average for airship raids would be 87.9 killed and 53.5 wounded, and for aeroplane raids 111.0 killed and 65.7 wounded.

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machines.¹ This Corps was mobilized into 4 squadrons with 109 officers and 66 aeroplanes, leaving at home 38 officers and 113 worn-out or unserviceable aeroplanes.² Duplication of organization and competition in bidding for machines and personnel in time of great need for rapid development resulted in friction and inefficiency. Various methods of co-ordination were attempted. On August 24, 1917, the War Cabinet decided to accept in principle the establishment of a separate Air Ministry, and this was set up by the Air Force (Constitution) Act of November 29, 1917.³ The actual merger between the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service did not take place until April 1, 1918. At the time of the Armistice the Royal Air Force mustered 30,112 officers and 263,400 men and 22,171 aircraft of which 3,300 were in first line service in France.⁴ The number of airships had been increased from 7 in 1914 to 103 in 1918.⁵

Air Disarmament at Paris and Washington

There was no hesitation in the Supreme War Council as to the air armaments to be left to Germany. The speed and comparative secrecy with which bombing raids could be directed against large population centres endowed military and naval aviation with an especially "offensive" character. Under the criterion of allowing Germany only the armaments required to maintain internal order and the integrity of her frontiers, there was no need for military and naval aircraft. They were therefore abolished and a prohibition was placed upon their development. This action raised the serious problem of commercial aviation. The difficulty of drawing a difference between military and civil aviation and the facility with which civil aviation could be transformed for military purposes gave rise to serious doubts of the effectiveness of limi-

¹ Cmd. 100.

² *Military Effort of the British Empire during the War, 1914-1920*, p. 495.

³ Cmd. 9005 of 1917, pp. 55-66; Spaight, J. M., *The Beginnings of Organized Air Power*, pp. 1-204; Gamble, C. F. Snowden, *The Air Weapon*.

⁴ 214 H.C. Debs., 5 s., col. 1636; Cmd. 100; *The Times*, January 24, 1919.

⁵ *Ibid.*

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tations on military aircraft. This problem was to dominate all post-war discussions of the limitation and reduction of air armaments.

The limitation of Germany's air armaments was considered with the military terms. On February 12, 1919, the Council of Ten decided that a committee presided over by Marshal Foch should draw up the naval, military and air conditions of the preliminaries of peace to be presented to Germany for signature.¹ On March 3rd, Foch presented the report of the military commission which regulated the military and air statutes of Germany. Provision was made for a German Air Force of 1,000 men with 100 machines to help with the minesweeping of the North Sea. This force was to continue in existence until October 1, 1919, after which time it was to be disbanded. In the future Germany might have no military or naval air forces. During the discussion of this report in the Supreme Council of March 7, 1919, Lloyd George said that he had no objection to the entire suppression of the German Air Force.² The issue was not decided, however, until March 12th.

On this date Mr. Balfour raised the problem of differentiating between military and commercial aeroplanes. He questioned the wisdom of complete German disarmament as he was inclined to consider military aeroplanes an effective means of maintaining order. Overriding this objection, Foch asked the Council to agree immediately to the principle of the aerial disarmament of Germany, leaving for future discussion the problem of differentiation between civil and military aviation. General Groves said that it would be very difficult to prevent Germany setting up a large potential military air service under the guise of commercial enterprise. The Council finally agreed to accept air disarmament of Germany³ and to refer to a commission the task of differentiating between military and commercial planes in order to make this disarmament effective. As a safeguard, it agreed to provide

¹ *Vide supra*, pp. 254-257.

² Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris*, XV, p. 246.

³ Treaty of Versailles, Articles 198 and 199.

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for the suspension of all manufacture of aeroplane parts until the acceptance of the peace terms.¹ General Sir Henry Wilson commented on the air terms as "fantastically severe and illogical."²

On March 17, 1919, the Aeronautical Commission reported to the Supreme Council on the differentiation between military and commercial aircraft. It was unanimous in finding that civil aeroplanes and airships could be easily transformed into weapons carriers. As a consequence, it was also unanimously agreed that all aviation and all aeronautical fabrication should continue to be forbidden in Germany and all other enemy States until the signature of the Treaty of Peace. No such agreement could be reached, however, on whether it would be necessary, in view of the easy transformation of commercial aircraft into craft of war, to prohibit civilian aviation in Germany and all other enemy States after the Treaties of Peace. To this question the British Government replied:

"Yes, for a period long enough to dissipate the very extensive air industry now existing in Germany and all States which became our enemies by reason of the war. This period should not, in its opinion, be less than two to five years."

France, in fear of bombing raids, desired a prohibition for twenty to thirty years to ensure the destruction of all existing flying material and the dispersion of personnel. Italy also advocated a long period both as a penalty and a precaution. The United States, on the other hand, considered all such restrictions of the entire flying activity of Germany and her Allies neither wise nor practicable.³ The Supreme Council accepted an article prohibiting the manufacture and importation of air material until six months after the coming into force of the Treaty of Peace.⁴

At the meeting of the Heads of Delegations, on September 11, 1919, Mr. Balfour read a report of General Seely on the development of aircraft industry in Germany. Internal civil aviation was

¹ Miller, *op. cit.*, XV, pp. 341-350.

² Callwell, *Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson*, II, p. 174.

³ Miller, *op. cit.*, XV, pp. 389-391; Baker, R. S., *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, I, pp. 412-415.

⁴ Article 201.

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being developed on an immense scale and German companies were buying up old army aeroplanes. The German Government was heavily subsidizing civil aviation. German aircraft industry had already obtained a footing in neutral markets, and it was certain that the foundation of German air power was the development of the aircraft industry.¹ The prohibition on the manufacture of aircraft which was to regulate German air activity for six months after the entry into force of the Treaty was extended until October 5, 1922. Thereafter the manufacture and importation of aircraft was subjected to nine rules regulating construction, speed, and carrying powers, in order to ensure that civil aviation would be as different as possible from military aviation.²

Another provision, adopted by the Allied and Associated Powers to cripple German aerial development, ensured to Allied and Associated aircraft the complete freedom of passage through the air over Germany as well as freedom of transit and of landing.³ This provision was not reciprocal and was to last until the complete evacuation of German territory by Allied and Associated troops. When this article was discussed in the meeting of Foreign Ministers of April 23, 1919, there was no disagreement on principle, and it was adopted subject to the assent of Secretary of State Lansing.⁴ It was discussed again at the meeting of April 26, 1919. Lansing objected to the lack of reciprocity. Captain Roper explained that the Aeronautical Commission "had originally intended to put a stop to all German aerial activity, but the Supreme Council had disapproved of any such arrangement." The aim of the provision was to prevent Germany from interfering out of ill will with the passage of Allied and Associated aircraft over her territory. Reciprocity would be established when Germany entered the League or was invited to adhere to the Convention regarding International Air Navigation. Lansing objected to the suppression of all German economic aerial activity, and to meet his views the unilateral privileges accorded to the

¹ Miller, *op. cit.*, XVI, p. 503.

² Toynbee, Arnold, *Survey of International Affairs, 1920-1923*, p. III; Colegrove, Kenneth W., *International Control of Aviation*, p. 80.

³ Article 200.

⁴ Miller, *op. cit.*, XVI, pp. 101-105.

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Allied and Associated Powers were limited until January 1, 1923.¹

The difficulty of differentiating between military and civil aviation which complicated the air disarmament of Germany arose once more at the Washington Conference of 1921-1922. The invitation of the American Government had envisaged discussion of the limitation of all armaments, naval, military, and air. The attitude of the French Government on the limitation of land armaments made it difficult to discuss the limitation of air armaments which were closely linked up with land armaments. Nevertheless, an expert sub-committee was set up to report on the limitation of aircraft as to numbers, character, and use. In its report which was read at the meeting of the Commission on the Limitation of Armament, on January 7, 1922, the sub-committee concluded that "the development of commercial aeronautics and the development of a nation's air power are inseparable. . . . Speaking broadly, all aircraft will be of some military value no matter what restrictions may be placed on their character."² After examining the various methods of limiting both commercial and military aircraft, the sub-committee came to the general conclusion that

"It is not practicable to impose any effective limitations upon the numbers or characteristics of aircraft, either commercial or military, excepting in the single case of lighter-than-air craft."³

During the discussion on this report, on January 9, 1922, Mr. Balfour admitted the impossibility of differentiating between military and commercial aircraft.

"In those circumstances he must admit with reluctance, but with a clear conviction, that probably the sub-committee were in the right when they said it would be quite hopeless, and not only hopeless but undesirable, to attempt at the present time and in the present stage of human knowledge to limit aircraft."⁴

The sub-committee of experts had expressed another conclusion "that the use of aircraft in war should be governed by

¹ Miller, *op. cit.*, XVI, pp. 119-130.

² *Sen. Doc.*, No. 126, 67th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 396.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 407.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 414.

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the rules of warfare as adapted to aircraft by a further conference which should be held at a later date.”¹ This suggestion for further enquiry was well received and, on February 4, 1922, the Conference agreed to set up a commission to study the question of whether existing rules of international law covered new methods of attack and defence resulting from the introduction of new agencies of warfare and whether any changes in the existing rules ought to be adopted. This Commission of Jurists met at The Hague from December 11, 1922, until February 11, 1923, and drafted a code for the regulation of aerial warfare. The greatest difficulty arose in framing rules for aerial bombardment. The Declaration of the Second Hague Conference afforded no solution. The code of rules finally drawn up provided that aerial bombardment was legitimate only when directed at a military objective and was illegitimate when used to terrorize civilian populations or to enforce compliance with requisitions in kind or specie. Military objectives were clearly defined. Bombardment of villages, towns, dwellings, and buildings not within the area of hostilities was prohibited. Where a military objective was so situated that it could not be bombarded without the indiscriminate bombing of all the civilian population it could not be bombarded at all. A belligerent state was liable to pay compensation for injuries to persons or property caused by the violation of these rules.² These rules still remain in the state of propositions for the consideration of the Governments.³

The British Post-War Air Policy

The remarkable developments in aviation technique which took place under the pressure of war conditions and the immense growth of British aircraft industry which reached a production of 3,500 aeroplanes and seaplanes and 4,000 engines during the

¹ *Sen. Doc.*, No. 126, 67th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 408.

² Proposed Rules for the Regulation of Aerial Warfare, Articles 22-26.

³ Cf. More, J. B., *International Law and Some Current Illusions and Other Essays*, pp. 182-289. The text of the general report of the Committee of Jurists is reproduced, pp. 210-289.

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month of November 1918, created problems of great complexity in determining what was to be Great Britain's policy after the war. At the time of the Armistice Great Britain was the leading air Power in the world. She had 14,000 serviceable machines to France's 12,000 and Germany's 11,000. Her trained flying personnel numbered 24,000 to France's 16,000 and Germany's 12,000. Her total Air Service strength was 295,000. The corresponding figure for France was 150,000. British aircraft industry held the lead in production. From January to October 1918 the output of machines was 26,685 and of engines 29,561, while France produced 22,000 machines and 39,500 engines during the same period.¹ After the signing of the Armistice the problem of the British Government was to organize the Air Force on a peace footing and cut down aerial production without destroying the whole industry. Financial necessity dictated a policy of immediate retrenchment. The estimates for 1919-1920 called for a total of 150,000 effectives as a first step towards reduction to the estimated peace footing of 102 squadrons with 5,300 officers and 54,000 men.² This number was decreased to 2,812 officers and 23,862 other ranks by October 1, 1920.³

The decrease in British air strength after the war seriously affected the aircraft industry on which British air power was based. Production stimulated by the war was stopped due to lack of demand. Civil aviation remained undeveloped and there was serious danger that the industry would collapse. The only means of averting this lay in a strong and developing civil aviation. Just as the merchant marine furnished ships and trained men for use in case of war, commercial aviation would provide trained personnel and important war material in case of necessity. The growth of a commercial fleet was as important to the maintenance of strong air power as a commercial navy had been to sea-power. This interdependence had been emphasized at the Peace Con-

¹ Spaight, *op. cit.*, p. 293. These figures were reached after an examination of all evidence, official or not. Major-General Groves gives the following figures for all aircraft at the end of the war: Great Britain, 22,000; France, 20,000; Germany, 18,000 (*The Times*, March 21, 1922).

² 113 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1505-1511.

³ 135 *H.C. Debs.*, 5s., col. 808.

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ference in the failure to find a differentiation between civil and military aviation. Immediately after the war, therefore, the British Government created a department of civil aviation to negotiate international air agreements, to plan and prepare air routes at home and abroad, to examine, advise on, and assist in any way all schemes of aerial transport, and to register and license pilots and aircraft.¹

A Committee on Government Assistance for the Development of Civil Aviation reported on April 20, 1920,

"that the failure of civil aviation would result not only in a loss of British prestige in a new and potentially important sphere of commercial activity, but would also react unfavourably on service aviation by depriving it of a reserve of personnel, material, and constructional facilities from which to draw in the event of war."²

To prevent the loss of an industry which was necessary in war the Committee recommended State assistance to civil aviation. This aid should be in proportion to actual work done and useful experience gained. The demand and specifications of requirements for aeroplanes must emanate from the user, as experience had shown the necessity of special designs for commercial machines and engines. The Government, in 1921, adopted the policy advocated by the Committee of subsidizing air transport companies working on approved air routes and in a certain flight time. In 1923 the Hambling Committee of civil aviation subsidy suggested granting £1,000,000 over a period of ten years to a company to be founded with £1,000,000 capital.³ On this basis the Imperial Airways Ltd. was founded in 1924, and it gradually developed a system of air communication within the Empire. Air services to Egypt, India, Singapore, and Australia, and from Egypt to South Africa, were inaugurated during the ensuing years under the aegis of the British Treasury.

The air policy of the British Government immediately after the war was to maintain sufficient air forces for co-operation with the Navy and the Army, and a small independent Air Force as

¹ 113 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1515-1518.

² Cmd. 770 of 1920, p. 6.

³ *The Times*, May 5 and 9, 1923.

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a reserve. In patrolling for submarines, in spotting and reconnaissance, in direct attack against moving columns and military objectives aircraft had rendered such indispensable service during the war that it was associated permanently to the Army and Navy. The importance of aircraft to the Navy was such that until the report of the Committee to consider navy-air relations, on August 2, 1923, there was constant agitation for a separate naval branch of the Royal Air Force. The solution finally adopted was for the Navy to train its own personnel and control the fighting air equipment of the fleet while nominal control of personnel and equipment was retained by the Air Ministry.¹

The Royal Air Force was also used in co-operation with the Army in the execution of its duties as Empire police. In restoring order in scattered territories and in saving both lives and cost the enormous importance and value of the Royal Air Force for police work was amply demonstrated. In 1919 the Royal Air Force was in action against the Afghans, the Mahsuds, and the Waziris, shortening operations considerably and producing most effective results. Early in 1920 the action of Air Force in Somaliland opened up the possibility of substituting air control for military control in policing the "outlying" districts of the Empire where communications were difficult to establish and maintain. The Somaliland campaign which cost £30,000 achieved more than a pre-war expedition which had cost £2,500,000—or £6 to £7,000,000 in post-war values. The casualties had been limited to one African soldier who died of wounds and one slightly wounded instead of numbering into thousands.² Twelve D.H.9 aeroplanes were used, and in three weeks the power of the "Mad Mullah" was broken in a district which he had ravaged for seventeen years.³ So cheap and effective was this police force that, in view of the straightened financial situation, the British Government decided to substitute air control for military control in Iraq. In October 1922 the forces in Iraq were no less than

¹ 167 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1717-1720.

² 125 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1354, 1389-1390.

³ 126 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1583; *The Times*, February 19, 1920.

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33 infantry battalions, 6 cavalry regiments, 16 batteries, etc., and 5 squadrons of the Royal Air Force. In 1927, besides the Iraqi units and local levies, there were just 5 squadrons of the Royal Air Force and 2 Indian battalions.¹ The cost was reduced from £27,000,000 in 1921-1922 to £13,000,000 in 1922-1923.

British air policy immediately after the war had been to reduce the Air Force to those effectives necessary for co-operation with the Army and Navy and for independent police action in the Empire. During the financial year 1922-1923 Great Britain had 32 active squadrons of aeroplanes.² Of these, 8 were for co-operation with the Navy and 2 for co-operation with the Army; 8 were in Iraq, 6 in India, 4 in Egypt and Palestine.³ The rest were assigned to communications or to home defence. This left the British Isles very weak in aerial defence. In December 1922 the strength of the Royal Air Force in Europe was 1,158 trained pilots, 75 observers, and 19,421 other ranks with 15 squadrons of 12 planes each. France, the nearest Continental Power, had in Europe 3,039 flying personnel and 30,477 ground duties personnel with 100 squadrons of 8 to 10 planes each.⁴

In view of this situation there was widespread popular agitation in England for home defence against air attack. The war had brought a new experience to the English people. For the first time in centuries the masses of the population in the interior of the island had come into direct contact with war. The development of air power had permitted the enemy to overcome the natural barrier of the Channel and the "steel walls" of England and to strike directly at the population which had hitherto lain secure in the faith that war could not reach them. In the number of casualties the air raids over England were not more formidable than the bombardment of coastal towns from war vessels. The air raids, however, undermined morale and left a profound sense of insecurity. From the point of view of the air, Great Britain

¹ 203 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1397.

² 151 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 2346; 160 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1779; *The Times*, December 23, 1922.

³ 166 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 2509.

⁴ 160 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1779; *The Times*, December 23, 1922.

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lost her insularity; she was one with the continent of Europe. The free mobility of the air medium, the proximity of London to the sea, the influence of partisan opinion that aircraft had defeated all existing weapons—ships, guns, tanks, etc.—and the fact that anti-aircraft defence was powerless to stop all incoming raids, combined to increase the feeling of insecurity in England and to render imperative the formulation of a clear-sighted policy on the development of air power.

In the debates on the Air Estimates for 1920–1921, in March 1920, Lieutenant-Commander Kenworthy favoured an International Air Force working under the control and the orders of the League of Nations.¹ The underlying note of the debates, however, was that aircraft provided a new weapon which might prove dangerous to Britain. The debates on the Estimates for the next year were in a similar vein. The opinion that there was no defence against air attack had gained almost universal adherence. The view of the Air Ministry was that the best defence against bombing was offence or retaliation—bomb the enemy's towns if he bombs yours. Therefore a bombing school was started. But uneasiness was evidenced over the huge French programme of aeroplanes, which called for large increases in home forces.² Brigadier-General P. R. C. Groves, in a series of articles on air policy, submitted that the aims of British air policy should be:

“I. First and foremost, to build up as rapidly as possible and in the most economical manner a striking Air Force for home defence. If this is not done the heart of the Empire, England itself, will be open to sudden direct attack from the air.

“II. To provide the Navy and Army with the specialized air forces essential to their efficiency.

“III. To create a Royal Air Force organization to carry out duties at present performed by the two other Services where such duties can be effectively and more economically so performed.

“IV. Last, but not least, to maintain and develop the aircraft industry. This will be secured automatically if the above specified aims are achieved.”³

¹ 126 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1639.

² 152 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 285–419.

³ *The Times*, March 27, 1922. *Vide ibid.*, March 21–27, 1922; May 3–5, 1923.

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In view of the developments of the French Air Force, the subject of home defence against air attack was studied by a sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence. The opinion of this sub-committee was that air defences required to be largely strengthened.¹ The Committee of Imperial Defence decided, at the end of July 1922, that the Royal Air Force must be increased without delay.² On August 3, 1922, Lloyd George announced that the Government "as the result of an enquiry by the Committee of Imperial Defence have decided to adopt a scheme submitted by the Air Ministry providing for a force of 500 machines for home defence at an increased cost of £2,000,000 per annum."³ Asked whether the increase in air expenditure and in the Air Force was due to the "enormous development of the Air Service in France," Lloyd George answered, "Well, we have to take all circumstances into account."⁴ Mr. Baldwin's statement which laid the basis for British air policy brought out more clearly that the French programme was the chief consideration influencing the Government.

On June 26, 1923, Mr. Baldwin said before the House of Commons that the Government had reached the following conclusions with reference to British air power:

"In addition to meeting the essential air power requirements of the Navy, Army, Indian, and overseas commitments, British air power must include a Home Defence Air Force of sufficient strength adequately to protect us against air attack by the strongest air force within striking distance of this country.

"It should be organized in part on a regular and permanent military basis, and in part on a territorial or reserve basis, but so arranged as to ensure that sufficient strength will be immediately available for purposes of defence. The fullest possible use to be made of civilian labour and facilities.

"In the first instance the Home Defence Force should consist of 52 squadrons, to be created with as little delay as possible, and the Secretary of State for Air has been instructed forthwith to take preliminary steps for carrying this decision into effect. The result of this

¹ *The Times*, July 6, 1922.

³ 157 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1662.

² *Ibid.*, August 1, 1922.

⁴ *Ibid.*, col. 1663.

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proposal will be to add 34 squadrons to the authorized strength of the Royal Air Force. The details of the organization will be arranged with a view to the possibility of subsequent expansion, but before any further development is put in hand the question should be re-examined in the light of the then air strength of foreign Powers.”¹

This declaration laid down the “One-Power Standard” for the Home Defence Air Force as compared with France, the strongest Air Force within striking distance. The immediate expansion programme was that foreseen by Lloyd George a year before, 52 squadrons to be finished by 1929 or 1930. Of these, 18 would be Fighter Squadrons with 216 machines and 34 Bomber Squadrons with 240 machines, making a total of 556 machines. The 34 Bomber Squadrons were to be divided in 21 Regular units and 13 Special Reserve and Auxiliary units. Provision was made for 100 per cent war reserve in machines.²

In spite of this policy of expansion, the British Government strongly advocated the limitation of air armaments. In view of the financial situation and the popular agitation for disarmament it was loath to enter on a new programme of armaments building if it could be avoided. Mr. Baldwin concluded his statement of the Government’s air policy by saying:

“In conformity with our obligation under the Covenant of the League of Nations, His Majesty’s Government would gladly co-operate with other Governments in limiting the strength of air armaments on lines similar to the Treaty of Washington in the case of the Navy, and any such arrangement, it is needless to say, would govern the policy of air expansion set out in this statement.”³

In answer to a question, Mr. Baldwin said that he hoped it would not be long before there would be some agreement as to limitation. The Government could initiate nothing until the result of the work of the Temporary Mixed Commission was known.⁴ On July 11, 1923, Lord Salisbury repeated the same policy in the House of Lords, that the Government would be willing to

¹ 165 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 2142-2143.

³ 165 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 2142-2143.

² *The Times*, January 19, 1926.

⁴ *Ibid.*, col. 2145.

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follow the lines of Washington and do its utmost to induce foreign Governments to limit their air armaments.¹

In the discussion on Imperial Defence, the Imperial Conference of 1923 took note of

“the necessity for the maintenance by Great Britain of a Home Defence Air Force of sufficient strength to give adequate protection against air attack by the strongest air force within striking distance of her shores.”²

While in favour of providing for the safety and integrity of all parts of the Empire, the Conference earnestly desired the further limitation of armaments and trusted that no opportunity would be lost to promote this object. This was the air policy followed by the British Government from 1922 to 1932—providing for home defence on the One-Power Standard, while doing everything possible to promote the limitation of air armaments. The policy of the Labour Government was the same as that of its predecessors. Mr. Leach, Under-Secretary of State for Air, announced on February 19, 1924, that the Labour Government was going on with the scheme of air defence adopted by the previous Government, but at the same time would welcome any attempts at disarmament.³ On April 16, 1924, Major-General Seely pointed out, in the House of Commons, the desirability and necessity of an understanding with other Powers to stop the race in aerial armaments. In answering, Mr. MacDonald made it quite plain that the Government was ready and eager for such an understanding, and would welcome an invitation for the discussion of the limitation not only of aerial but of all armaments. As soon as outstanding difficulties in Europe were settled, the problem of armaments reduction would have to be approached seriously.⁴

Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for Air, reviewed the main outlines of air policy in the House of Commons on February 25, 1926.

“Upon the whole they have remained substantially the same for the past three years: First of all, the duty of providing a Home Defence

¹ *The Times*, July 12, 1923.

² Cmd. 1987 of 1923, pp. 16-17.

³ 169 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1670-1672.

⁴ 172 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1495-1500.

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Force against all possible air attack; secondly, the duty of carrying out the air work for the Navy and the Army; thirdly, the duty of providing air garrisons in such parts of the Empire as are suited to them; and lastly, the duty of developing Empire air communications, and generally of expanding the knowledge and practice of air into all sections of the community in this country."

The Home Defence Force had grown from 3 squadrons in 1922 to 25 in 1926 and 3 more squadrons were to be added during the financial year. Leaving out Russia, Great Britain had become the second greatest Air Power in the world. But the Locarno Treaties had been signed. As they lessened the risk of war, the Government felt justified in prolonging the period of the initial expansion of the Home Defence Force to 52 squadrons.

"The Government have decided that the expansion programme should remain intact. Their decision means nothing more or less than that the programme will be eventually carried out, but that, as a result of the signing of the Locarno Treaty, it is possible to take a longer period for carrying it out than would have been the case if no Treaty had been signed."¹

This programme was continued, and in 1930, when the original Home Defence Force of 52 squadrons was to have been completed, the Home Defence Air Force was composed of only 26 regular squadrons and 11 non-regular. On March 18, 1930, Mr. Montague said he

"would like to stress the moderation and unprovocative character of British air policy and expenditure. . . . On the basis of the metropolitan strengths we have considerably less than a half-power standard compared with the standard of our nearest neighbour. In spite of these facts and figures, His Majesty's Government do not propose to deviate from a policy dictated by the firm intention not to be drawn into a competition in air armaments. Expansion will only take place in so far as it is forced upon us by developments abroad and no other course remains open."²

"Our position [with regards to air disarmament] is naturally one of sympathy and support of all that can be done on reasonable lines to secure common action in this direction between the nations of the world."³

¹ 192 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 766-772.

² 236 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1926-1927.

³ *Ibid.*, col. 1995.

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Air Disarmament in the League of Nations

The attempt to limit air armaments at the Washington Conference had come to nothing owing to the difficulty inherent in the problem, the impossibility of making an effective differentiation between civil and military aviation. While each country was expanding its air armaments and preparing to defend itself against a war on civilian population, there was no attempt made to regulate or render impossible this method of warfare. The rules regarding air warfare recommended by the Hague Committee of Jurists in 1923 remained unadopted. Bombing aircraft was developed at great speed under the conviction that the only defence against air attack was counter-attack. The problem of air disarmament remained linked up with land and naval disarmament, and, in the absence of both, no agreements could be reached to limit aircraft.

The League of Nations had been occupied with the problems of disarmament since its inception. After the attempts at direct limitation of land and naval armaments in the Esher plan and the Rome Naval Conference, the efforts of the League of Nations were concentrated on indirect attempts to limit armaments through the development of satisfactory political situations. With the foundation of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference in 1925, the problems of disarmament were once more directly approached. Air disarmament was one of the problems to be studied by this Commission.

The problem of differentiation between civil and military aviation was brought to the fore in one of the questions drawn up by the Committee of the Council to guide the Preparatory Commission in its work. It dealt with the possibility of differentiating between commercial and military aviation and of assessing the value of a commercial air fleet in estimating the air strength of a country. This question was referred to Sub-Commission A for report on the military aspects and to Sub-Commission B for the economic aspects. Sub-Commission B, in turn, referred the problem to a Committee of Experts on Civil Aviation.

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Sub-Commission A considered the methods of limiting military aircraft. There was more agreement in this domain than in the limitation of land and naval armaments. The limitation of air effectives reflected the same difficulty regarding trained reserves which had arisen in the debates on land effectives. This difficulty, however, was only a part of the wider problem of the limitation of military personnel. The delegations in Sub-Commission A were agreed that material formed the chief element of air armaments. As in the Sub-Committee of Experts on the Limitation of Aircraft at the Washington Conference, there was no disagreement in Sub-Commission A on the methods of limiting air war material, but only on the emphasis to be placed upon these methods. The British delegation agreed that volume formed the predominant factor in the limitation of dirigibles. It added, however, total horse-power and number as standards of comparison among the air armaments of the various countries. Similarly, in the limitation of aeroplanes, while giving precedence to total horse-power as a standard of comparison, it thought number should be taken into account. It was only in this insistence upon consideration of the number of aircraft of service types maintained in commission in first-line combatant units of the metropolitan forces that the British delegation differed from the majority of Sub-Commission A in the limitation of air war material.

Greater differences of opinion in Sub-Commission A arose when civil aviation was considered. Although the British delegation recognized that the material of civil aviation formed a part of the war potential of the countries, it maintained that "any method for the reduction or limitation of air armaments can apply only to the war aircraft of the different countries, and should not interfere with the expansion of communication, commerce, or the building of civil aircraft."¹ While admitting that a method was not comprehensive which did not take into account civil aviation, it was of opinion that a limitation confined to military

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Report of Sub-Commission A, p. 50.

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aviation only had the advantage of simplifying the problem in hand.¹ Therefore, it opposed all methods of limitation which took civil aviation into account. It also opposed the limitation of manufactures and imports of military air material as impracticable and unjustified.

The economic aspects of the methods of limiting civil aviation foreseen in Sub-Commission A were studied by the Committee of Experts on Civil Aviation. This Committee based its examination of the subject on the principle that

“In any limitation of air armaments it is essential to avoid hampering the development of civil aviation.”²

On this basis the Committee unanimously agreed that the system of limitation of military and civil aviation as a whole could not be effectively applied without hampering the development of civil aviation and thereby involving undesirable economic consequences. The same opinion was reached in regard to the combined system of direct limitation of air armaments in service in peace-time and indirect limitation of air armaments in war-time. The Committee came to the conclusion that the economic consequences of limitation of air armaments would be less serious if the system adopted involved fewer undertakings likely to hamper civil aviation. Therefore, it made various suggestions to promote the development of civil aircraft of a type different from military aircraft.

The Committee of Experts had offered no solution to the main difficulty facing the limitation of air armaments. It had rather emphasized the difficulty by suggesting that further developments of commercial aircraft, if free from considerations of military needs, might bring about a type of civil aircraft which could be differentiated from military aircraft. It had suggested that the development of civil aviation should be directed toward economic ends and organized on autonomous lines. State organs interfering

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Report of Sub-Commission A, p. 112.

² *Ibid.*, Sub-Commission B, Report No. II.

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directly or indirectly with civil aviation should be separate from the organs dealing with military aviation. It was desirable that Governments should refrain from prescribing the embodiment of military features in civil aviation and that they should avoid using military aviation material for civil undertakings. Civil aviation undertakings should not require their personnel to have military training or give such training. Civil air transport lines should be encouraged or subsidized for economic or social purposes and not for military purposes. Lastly, the Committee called attention to the desirability of developing international commercial aviation undertakings.

The British position regarding air armaments was different from her position regarding naval or land armaments. Lord Cecil had made this clear in the first session of the Preparatory Commission, on May 18, 1926.

“Air armaments are perhaps in a different position from both the Army and Navy, in that the function of the air service is primarily that of attack rather than of defence, and therefore undoubtedly the size of the air armaments maintained by my country is dependent very largely on the size of those maintained by other countries. There again we should welcome any agreement which would enable us to reduce those armaments.”¹

The British Government was anxious to limit air armaments, and, since the size of its home forces depended upon French air development, any agreement which limited French air armaments would permit limitation of British air force. In the draft convention which it submitted to the Preparatory Commission at its third session, the British Government provided that the limitation of air armaments should be effected “by limiting the number of shore-based aircraft of service types maintained within the limits of each State which is a Party to the present Convention.” This proposal safeguarded the most essential British interests, as it limited only home forces and left untouched the fleet air arm—that part of it based on ships—and the air force policing the

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series II, p. 15.

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Empire. The British Government, however, did not insist on its point of view, but showed willingness to reach agreement. When presenting the Draft Convention to the Preparatory Commission, on March 27, 1927, Lord Cecil said:

“The point of view adopted is that for which the air representatives of the British Government contended in Sub-Commission A. The matter is admittedly one of the greatest difficulty, and one on which I shall be most anxious to hear what my colleagues have got to say.”¹

The French Draft Convention limited air personnel together with the limitation of land and naval effectives. Air material in commission in military formations or formations organized on a military basis stationed at home and overseas was limited by total engine horse-power. Dirigibles were also limited by total volume. These undertakings were accepted only in the light of existing developments of civil aviation in other countries. The task of the Preparatory Commission in co-ordinating the French and British Draft Conventions was eased by the desire of the British Government to reach some agreement with France on the limitation of air armaments. As Lord Cecil expressed it on April 2, 1927:

“To suggest that we are not anxious to limit aircraft is really flying in the face not only of all our assertions but to attribute to the British Government something less than common sense. There is no Government in the world that is more anxious, from its geographical situation and otherwise, to limit air armaments; it is the one armament with which our fleet cannot deal.”²

This vital interest in the limitation of air armaments caused the British Government to forgo its own views to reach agreement. While the military organization made certain methods of limitation more advantageous, the strategic position of Great Britain called for acceptance of any effective limitation of air armaments.

The first concession of Great Britain in the domain of air armaments related to the limitation of personnel. The British Government found it difficult to limit air effectives because this

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series IV, p. 12.

² *Ibid.*, Series IV, p. 130.

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could not be done effectively without fixing the number of men in civil aviation, and because of the wide difference among the countries in the personnel included in air effectives. In view of the difficulties involved, Lord Cecil suggested that the limitation of air forces by limiting air personnel was not really a practical solution.¹ Agreement was finally made possible by the new instructions given by the British Government to Lord Cecil. On April 11, 1927, he announced that the British Government was prepared to accept the limitation of air effectives, provided that only the total figure be limited, and that its different organization of mechanics be taken into account when the Conference fixed the numbers.

British concessions also enabled agreement on the limitation of air material. The British Government desired to limit the actual aeroplanes in service which could be used at any moment for attack. As the limitation of aircraft carriers already limited the number of aircraft which could be carried by ships, the British Government favoured the limitation of shore-based aircraft only. During the discussion the British representative agreed to combine the British and French method of limiting aircraft. Aeroplanes were to be limited by number and total horse-power, while dirigibles were limited by number, total horse-power, and total volume. On the other points at issue the British Government, at Lord Cecil's recommendation, accepted the views of the rest of the Commission. This body agreed to limit all aircraft in service in the armed forces and formations organized on a military basis. These limitations were approved by the Commission at a first reading together with a provision that they were to be accepted only in the light of the existing development of civil aviation in other countries. An article was added embodying the recommendations of the Committee of Experts on Civil Aviation for the purpose of "civilizing" commercial aviation.

The limitation of air armaments came up for a second reading at the first part of the sixth session. On April 19, 1929, Lord

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series IV, p. 116.

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Cushendun laid down the policy which the British Government would follow in the ensuing discussions on air armaments.

"Air power is, of course, of very special importance and interest to an Empire as scattered as ours, and embracing such wide stretches of relatively undeveloped territory. My country's home-defence problem is, however, broadly speaking, the same as that of the Continental countries, though its forces are at present considerably smaller than those of other European countries. My Government would therefore expect, as in the case of land armaments, to be able to agree to any further principles in connection with the limitation of air armaments that may secure the unanimous approval of other countries."¹

Accordingly, Lord Cushendun opposed the German proposal for the abolition of the launching of weapons of offence from the air, and for the abstention from preparation for such launching on the ground that it had failed to secure general assent. The abolition of any legal method of warfare did not come within the scope of the Commission. The British Government adhered to the amendments to the first reading text which received general assent, but refused to support those which did not receive such assent.

The same policy was followed, with one exception, in the third reading in the second part of the sixth session. The recent change of opinion of the British Government on budgetary limitation was evidenced in a proposal to add an article to the Draft Convention limiting the annual expenditure on the maintenance, purchase, and manufacture of war material for aerial armaments. In supporting this proposal, Lord Cecil explained the reasons for it.

"I am afraid that in this case, and, as I think, in a good many cases, the attempt to limit by direct limitation is one which is not satisfactory and not complete in any way. The question is: How can we make it more satisfactory and more complete? There is only one way, and that is to limit the amount of money that can be spent on this particular arm."²

Opposition was raised to this proposal, because it would tend to hamper the technical development of military aviation. When the British proposal was rejected by six votes to five, Lord Cecil said

¹ *Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference*, Series VIII, p. 43.

² *Ibid.*, Series X, p. 305.

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that it was the first decision of the Commission which he found very difficult to accept and asked that an express reserve be written into the report.

The Draft Convention, as finally adopted by the Preparatory Commission on December 9, 1930, limited the maximum air effectives of the armed forces stationed in the home country, the maximum effectives of the total air armed forces, the maximum effectives of the air formations organized on a military basis stationed in the home country, and those stationed overseas. There was an optional limitation of the maximum effectives in the armed forces stationed overseas.¹ Aeroplanes were limited by number and total horse-power, and dirigibles by number, total horse-power, and total volume. The limitation applied to total aeroplanes and dirigibles in the armed forces and the forces organized on a military basis. Optional limitations of aeroplanes and dirigibles stationed at home, overseas, and in aircraft carriers were also provided. Certain rules for "civilizing" commercial aviation were adopted on the basis of the recommendations of the Committee of Experts on Civil Aviation. Provision was made for publicity of numbers and horse-power of civil aircraft and for publicity of budgetary expenditure on air armaments.

The original British proposals on the limitation of air armaments had almost all disappeared. Only the limitation of the total number of aircraft had been adopted by combination with the French proposal of limitation of total horse-power. On all other points the British Government had given way to the predominant view. It made only two reservations. The first related to the absence of limitation of budgetary expenditures on air armaments. The British Government believed that the air arm, potentially the most destructive to civilization, would be most free for competitive international development if left unhampered by budgetary limitation. The second reservation dealt with the article for "civilizing" commercial aviation. The Government wished it to be clearly understood that the provision for the

¹ For countries with conscription there was a special provision limiting air effectives having served more than x years.

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encouragement of international economic agreements contained in this article did not imply commitment on the part of the Government to a complete internationalization of aviation. It reserved entire freedom of action on this point. These two reservations did not condition the full acceptance by the British Government of the provisions of the Draft Convention for the limitation of air armaments. The particularly vulnerable position of London in case of air attack made it imperative for Great Britain to reach agreement on the limitation of air armaments, and this fundamental necessity overshadowed lesser benefits to be derived from a particular method of limitation. Because, in the case of air armaments, the fundamental strategic consideration of the British Government did not clash with strategic necessities of other countries, agreement was easily reached on methods of limiting air armaments.

British Air Policy at the World Disarmament Conference

After the signing of the Locarno Treaties the British Government had slowed down its programme of increasing the Home Defence Air Force to fifty-two squadrons. In spite of the increase in air forces of Continental countries, the Government had continued authorizing a programme of only three squadrons a year, because it desired to promote a limitation in air armaments. In view of the pressure for economy, it was unwilling to build up a strong Air Force only to reduce it in an international disarmament convention. The successful conclusion of the work of the Preparatory Commission and the calling of the Disarmament Conference strengthened this view. In his memorandum on the Air Estimates, of March 2, 1931, the Secretary of State for Air explained the Government's policy.

"His Majesty's Government, having regard to the fact that Great Britain still ranks fifth in the world's air powers in terms of first-line strength and to the marked growth in recent years of air expenditure abroad, have approved a further modest instalment in the Home Defence Scheme, which will proceed in the coming year in accordance with programme. It is their earnest hope that the forthcoming Dis-

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armament Conference will bring about a general reduction in air armaments (the rapid development of which the world over they view with profound disquiet) and remove the present serious disparity between the Royal Air Force and foreign air services.”¹

The 12th Assembly of the League of Nations adopted an Italian proposal for an armaments truce of a year’s duration to provide the proper atmosphere for the Disarmament Conference. This truce to which the British Government adhered asked the Governments to refrain from any measure involving any increase in their armaments. Due to this truce, no new units were added to the Air Force during 1932 and Great Britain remained in fifth place among the air forces of the world. The Secretary of State for Air, Lord Londonderry, expressed the Government’s uneasiness over the situation. In view of the dependence of the Empire on air power,

“His Majesty’s Government would view the situation with anxiety, but for their earnest hope and expectation that the Disarmament Conference now in session at Geneva will bring about a reduction in air armaments.”²

This uneasiness grew as the Conference proceeded and effective limitations became less probable. The reaction against unilateral disarmament making itself felt at this time had serious repercussions in strengthening the feeling of air insecurity in Great Britain, and, eventually, in bringing about an increase in air armaments.

The policy of the British Government on air disarmament was not very definite at the opening of the World Disarmament Conference. As in the Preparatory Commission, the British Government, conscious of the threat of air weapons, desired to achieve limitation and was prepared to accept all reasonable proposals which could meet with general assent. In his speech opening the general discussion in the plenary Conference, Sir John Simon referred in passing to air armaments. In advocating qualitative disarmament—“the outlawing by international agreement of certain weapons and methods of warfare”—Sir John

¹ Cmd. 3807 of 1931, p. 2.

² Cmd. 4026 of 1932.

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mentioned bombing from the air as one of the new methods of warfare which tend to obliterate the distinction between combatants and non-combatants. He advocated the prohibition of all "practices which shock our common humanity."¹ The general discussion revealed a strong trend of opinion in favour of the entire abolition of military aviation, and the internationalization or control of civil aviation, with yet a stronger trend in favour of the abolition of bombing. Therefore, the British memorandum of February 22, 1932, which set forth the proposals of the United Kingdom delegation called for the "practical examination of the whole problem of bombing from the air in its widest possible form."²

The policy of the Government, however, was made clear in the debates on the Air Estimates, in the House of Commons, on March 15, 1932. Sir Philip Sassoon, Under-Secretary of State for Air, examined the arguments for an international air force, the abolition of military aviation, and the internationalization of commercial aircraft. He had not sufficient faith in the League of Nations or any international body to hand over to it the defence of the Empire and the safety of London. The abolition of military aviation merely gave supremacy to the country with the largest commercial air fleet, while the internationalization of civil aviation presented difficulties he could not deal with at the time. The British delegates in Geneva would consider all proposals, but the British Government had already showed its preference: it had scrapped its Air Force after the war, reduced it by seven-eighths, and was now in position to ask the other Powers to do likewise.³

Although there was no violent disagreement or conflict of opinion on the limitation of air armaments, the lack of political *entente* which was undermining any serious attempt to reach a disarmament convention, influenced adversely the limitation of air armaments. The Commissions marked time until a strong indication should be given as to the direction in which to proceed.

¹ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Verbatim Records of Plenary Meetings, I, p. 58.

² *Ibid.*, Conference Documents, I, p. 144.

³ 263 *H.C. Deb.*, 5 s., cols. 207-209.

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After the close of the general discussion, the various proposals made by the delegations were co-ordinated and sent to the proper commissions for consideration. On March 14, 1932, the Air Commission adopted the recommendation of a sub-committee that the Air Commission could not study the question of the internationalization of civil aviation until the General Commission had passed on the principle. The General Commission, on March 16th, sent the problem back to the Air Commission without committing itself on the question of principle. The Air Commission asked its Bureau to collect material for study and adjourned for Easter.

After adopting the Draft Convention as basis of its work, the General Commission proceeded with the discussion of Article 1 of this Convention. During the debates, on April 11, 1932, Mr. Gibson presented a resolution calling for qualitative reduction of land armaments. In accepting this resolution, Sir John Simon called attention to the fact that the corresponding questions in the range of naval and air armaments would have to be considered with equal definiteness. In the debate on qualitative disarmament which followed, Sir John, on April 20, 1932, presented a resolution in which the Conference declared its approval of the principle of qualitative disarmament. After this resolution had been adopted on April 23, the General Commission asked the various technical commissions to examine land, sea, and air armaments to select those weapons "whose character is most efficacious against national defence or most threatening to civilians."¹

The Air Commission referred the matter to a sub-committee which presented a draft report. This draft report was discussed and finally adopted on June 8, 1932. During the discussion the British representative did not initiate any policy, but voted with the majority. The conclusions of the Air Commission on qualitative disarmament were, of course, similar to those of the other commissions, *i.e.* all air armaments could be used for offensive purposes. The aircraft which might be regarded as most

¹ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, Minutes of the General Commission, I, pp. 38-116.*

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efficacious against national defence and most threatening to civil population was that "capable of the most effective direct action by the dropping or launching of means of warfare of any kind." The report explained the circumstances in which aircraft might be more or less efficacious against various objectives, but drew no clear principle of what air armaments were most particularly offensive. The policy of the British Government in the Air Commission was in general to follow the lead of the majority. After the Air Commission had agreed to study the internationalization of civil aviation on the basis of a Spanish proposal, Group-Captain Babington said that

"The United Kingdom delegation, although it had not submitted any proposal regarding the internationalization of civil aviation, was none the less ready to take part in the discussion of the problem and to make practical suggestions thereon."¹

The report of the technical committees having been distinctly unfavourable to qualitative limitation, there was general uncertainty as to the future procedure to be followed by the General Commission. On June 22, 1932, Mr. Gibson furnished the necessary impetus to the Conference by reading proposals submitted by President Hoover to the Conference. The American Government suggested:

"All bombing planes be abolished. This will do away with the military possession of types of planes capable of attacks upon civil populations and should be coupled with total prohibition of all bombardment from the air."²

Commenting on President Hoover's proposals, Sir John Simon remarked that there was difficulty with the abolition of bombing-planes, because any plane might be used for bombing, and because of the possible use of civil aviation. The British Government, however, was devoting its energy to the search for the most effective form by which the peril of unregulated and indiscriminate bombing of civilian populations might be removed from the world.

¹ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Minutes of the Air Commission, p. 105.

² *Ibid.*, Minutes of the General Commission, I, p. 123.

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The policy of the British Government was set forth in a statement made to the House of Commons on July 7, 1932, and distributed to the Conference on the same date.

"There is no aspect of international disarmament more vitally urgent than the adoption without delay of the most effective measures to preserve the civilian population from the fearful horrors of bombardment from the air. The Government of the United Kingdom would be prepared to go to any length, in agreement with other Powers, to achieve this object, and, if more drastic measures are proposed from any quarter and are shown to be practicable, they will examine them with the utmost sympathy."¹

This was the British policy on air disarmament followed throughout the work of the Preparatory Commission and the Disarmament Conference. The British Government desired limitation and reduction of air armaments in any effective manner possible. In view of the existing state of affairs in the Disarmament Conference the British made proposals which they thought would meet with general assent, expressed the least common denominator of the opinion of the Commission on air disarmament. They proposed the complete prohibition of all bombing from the air, save within limits to be laid down by international convention. Attacks upon the civilian population would be entirely prohibited. They also proposed a strict limitation in the unladen weight of all military and naval aircraft, troop-carriers and flying boats excepted, and a restriction in the number of all kinds of military and naval aircraft. The British Government drew attention to the fact that, although it had already decreased considerably its air strength, it was willing to make an additional contribution if general agreement could be reached. Commenting on this memorandum in the House of Commons, on July 12, 1932, Sir John Simon emphasized the vital interest of Great Britain in the regulation of bombardment from the air.

"My firm conviction is that there is nothing in the whole disarmament discussions which is more vital than that Great Britain

¹ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Conference Documents, I, p. 267; Cmd. 4122 of 1932.

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should play its own full part in seeing that steps should be taken effectively to stop this abominable practice of indiscriminate bombing which is threatening the whole future of the world.”¹

The British Government, however, had not judged accurately the state of opinion on air armaments in the General Commission. The general discussion on the Hoover proposals showed that the delegations were prepared to go further than the British Government’s proposals. This fact was evidenced in the draft resolution concluding the first phase of the Conference and presented to the General Commission on July 20th. In this resolution the Conference, determined to take all practicable measures to provide against the danger to civilization from aerial bombardment in case of war, recorded the following conclusions:

“1. Air attack against the civilian population shall be absolutely prohibited;

“2. The High Contracting Parties shall agree as between themselves that all bombardment from the air shall be abolished, subject to agreement with regard to measures to be adopted for the purpose of rendering effective the observance of this rule.

“These measures should include the following:

“(a) There shall be effected a limitation by number and a restriction by characteristics of military aircraft;

“(b) Civil aircraft shall be submitted to regulation and full publicity. Further, civil aircraft not conforming to the specified limitations shall be subjected to an international regime (except for certain regions where such a regime is not suitable) such as to prevent effectively the misuse of such civil aircraft.”²

In the meeting of July 21st Sir John Simon, in pursuance of the policy of the British Government to accept any proposal meeting with the consent of the other Powers, accepted this extension of the British proposal to the reciprocal prohibition of all bombing. He called attention to the necessary qualifications to such a prohibition. In the first place, the characteristics of military machines had to be so prescribed that they could not be used for

¹ 268 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 1247.

² *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Conference Documents, I, p. 269.

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bombing. In the second place, a satisfactory method of preventing the misuse of large civilian aeroplanes had to be devised. The resolution was adopted by the General Commission on July 22, 1932, and the Conference adjourned until the autumn.

The question of British air policy came up for discussion in the House of Commons on November 10, 1932, in a motion of censure on the Government's conduct of international affairs. Anxiety about the menace of the air was apparent. Mr. Baldwin, Lord President of the Council, summed up the feeling of air insecurity which was becoming more and more manifest in England, and made plain the facts on which British air policy was based. He laid down the proposition on which the British Cabinet and the Committee of Imperial Defence had been working.

"It is well also for the man in the street to realize that there is no power on earth that can protect him from being bombed. Whatever people may tell him, the bomber will always get through. . . . The only defence is offence, which means you have to kill more women and children more quickly than the enemy if you want to save yourself."¹

Then Mr. Baldwin asked:

"How have nations tried to deal with this terror of the air? I confess that the more I have studied this question the more depressed I have been at the perfectly futile attempts that have been made to deal with this problem. The amount of time that has been wasted at Geneva in discussing questions such as the reduction of the size of aeroplanes, the prohibition of the bombardment of the civil population, the prohibition of bombing, have really reduced me to despair."²

He did not believe that any prohibition of bombing would be effective so long as air forces existed. Nations would resort to it to defend their national existence. On this basis Mr. Baldwin explained his solution, which was, and continued to be, the view of the British Government.

"I am firmly convinced myself, and have been for some time, that if it were possible the air forces ought all to be abolished, but if they were,

¹ 270 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 632.

² *Ibid.*, cols. 633-634.

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there would still be civil aviation, and in civil aviation there are the potential bombers.”¹

Therefore, in order to abolish air forces, Mr. Baldwin felt that

“it is necessary for the nations of the world concerned . . . to devote the whole of their minds to this question of civil aviation, to see if it is possible so to control civil aviation that such disarmament will be feasible.”²

The same policy was found in the statement of Sir John Simon to the General Commission on November 17, 1932. After recalling the policy of the British Government that “they would be prepared to go to any length, in agreement with the other Powers,” to control bombardment, Sir John referred to the above-cited speech of Mr. Baldwin. Involved in the final abolition of bombing

“is the entire abolition, by international agreement, of military and naval machines and of bombing (apart from use of such machines as are necessary for police purposes in outlying places) combined with an effective international control of civil aviation. The difficulties to be surmounted in achieving, by international agreement, such a programme are evidently very great, but His Majesty’s Government are anxious to co-operate with the other chief Air Powers in a thorough examination into the practicability of so extensive a scheme.”³

As a first stage, until the more far-reaching programme should be adopted, the British Government renewed the propositions it had made in its memorandum of July 7th: *viz.* (1) immediate reduction of the air forces of the leading Powers to the level of those of the United Kingdom; (2) a cut of $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent all around in the air forces of the world thus reduced; (3) a limitation of unladen weight of military aircraft to the lowest figure upon which general agreement could be obtained.

The problems raised by the demand of Germany for equality of rights in armaments and her withdrawal from the Conference influenced the British attitude on the immediate steps to be taken regarding air disarmament. Although Sir John Simon, in his

¹ 270 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 635.

² *Ibid.*, col. 636.

³ Cmd. 4189 of 1932.

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speech of November 17, 1932, had maintained that Germany should be allowed no military or naval aviation pending examination of the more far-reaching aerial disarmament proposals, it became exceedingly difficult to delay this examination after the formal recognition of the right of Germany to equality in armaments contained in the Five-Power Declaration of December 11, 1932. It was imperative that a *de facto* air rearmament of Germany be avoided in view of the powerful feeling of insecurity already existing in Great Britain. Therefore, in its project to speed up the work of the Conference communicated to the General Commission on January 30, 1933, the British Government proposed that

“The Bureau shall at once constitute a committee of representatives of the principal air Powers to examine the possibility of the entire abolition of military and naval machines and of bombing from the air, combined with an effective international control of civil aviation. As a preliminary to the decision to be taken by the Committee of Air Powers, the Bureau shall at once—

- “(i) Fix the maximum unladen weight of military and naval aircraft;
- “(ii) Decide as to the disposal of machines exceeding that limit—whether they shall be scrapped, and, if so, the dates by which scrapping must have been effected;
- “(iii) Fix the numbers of machines exceeding the unladen weight which may be allowed to each State.”¹

The first part of the proposal regarding the creation of the committee to examine the abolition of military and naval aviation and of bombing and the international control of civil aviation formed the subject-matter of a draft resolution presented by the United Kingdom delegation at the meeting of the General Commission of February 16, 1933. The proposal was referred to the Air Commission.²

The feeling of uneasiness which had manifested itself in the debates of the House of Commons of November 10, 1932, had

¹ *Conf. D.*, 154; *Ser. L.o.N. Pub.*, 1933, IX, 1.

² *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Minutes of the General Commission, II, pp. 271-276.

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been strengthened by the speech of the Lord President of the Council. It vented itself in the debates on the Air Estimates on March 14, 1933. In spite of this increasing consciousness of the air peril, however, the air strength of Great Britain was not increased. As Sir Philip Sassoon explained, the British Government was still hopeful that the Disarmament Conference might accomplish sufficient reduction in air armaments to obviate the necessity of fulfilling the programme laid down in 1923.

"The decision to hold this ten-year-old programme in suspense for another year is a practical proof of the wholehearted desire of His Majesty's Government to promote a successful issue of the deliberations of the Disarmament Conference. . . .

"It is most earnestly to be hoped that they will, at the very least, result in a satisfactory agreement for the limitation and reduction of air armaments which will remove the menace of their competitive development. The air policy of this country is, and has always been, as I have pointed out on previous occasions, conspicuously moderate and unprovocative, and, as far as we are concerned, we are eager to co-operate in all practicable measures for removing the menace of which I have spoken from the realm of possibility. Nevertheless, while air forces exist, air power is as vital to our great Empire as sea power, and we cannot afford to neglect it. The House will recall the pronouncement of my right hon. Friend, the Lord President, made last November, that the kind of disarmament which would leave the disparity between our air strength and the air strengths of other nations relatively as great as it is to-day does not recommend itself to His Majesty's Government.

"The measures of air disarmament which we desire to see effected are such as will leave civilized countries with the minimum strength of aircraft necessary to ensure, firstly national safety at home, and, secondly, the maintenance of law and order and the protection and development of communications in more backward territories overseas."¹

Meanwhile, the General Commission was becoming increasingly involved in details and threatened to be completely lost unless a new initiative should bring it back to questions of actual limitations. After a meeting of the British Cabinet and the Committee of Imperial Defence, Prime Minister MacDonald came to Geneva

¹ 275 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1796-1797.

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and, on March 16, 1933, presented a Draft Convention complete with figures as a basis for agreement. In this Convention the British Government followed the lines of policy laid down in its memoranda of July 7, 1932, and January 30, 1933, and in the speech of Sir John Simon of November 17, 1932. Mr. MacDonald explained the proposed articles in the General Commission.

"In principle, his Government did not defend military aviation. In principle, it would like to see military aviation abolished, but it must not leave itself open to anybody who misused civil aviation and tore to tatters agreements concluded at Geneva or anywhere else. In the meantime, whilst searching for a solution to the major problem, the United Kingdom delegation proposed immediate and progressive reduction of numbers, together with a qualitative reduction which would be a great contribution to quantitative disarmament."¹

The first article on air armaments of the British Draft Convention provided for acceptance of the complete abolition of bombing from the air, except for police purposes in certain outlying regions. Rejected in the Preparatory Commission, the prohibition of bombing had come to be generally accepted by the delegations at the General Disarmament Conference. The British Government had supported the prohibition from the first with the reservation regarding outlying regions. After the war the British Government had used aeroplanes armed with bombs to police certain parts of the Empire where the topographic and climatic conditions made the use of land forces as police more expensive in money and men. In view of the urgent need for economy the British Government was loath to abandon a practice which had proved so effective, hence the exception to the abolition of bombing from the air. This exception met with much criticism in the General Commission, but both Sir John Simon and Mr. MacDonald maintained in the debates on disarmament in the House of Commons, in November 1933, that the British reservation regarding air bombing had not occupied the Conference long or acted as a serious obstacle to an agreement.²

¹ *Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments*, Minutes of the General Commission, II, p. 356.

² 281 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 596.

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Besides the prohibition on bombing the British Draft Convention contained the principles of limitation of air armaments which had found general agreement and which the British delegation had repeatedly voiced. The Permanent Disarmament Commission was to devote itself immediately to working out the best possible scheme for the complete abolition of military and naval aircraft combined with the effective supervision of civil aviation to prevent its misuse for military purposes, or, failing such effective supervision, the determination of the minimum number of machines required by each Party consistent with national safety and obligations and the particular circumstances of each country. These schemes were to be presented before the Second Disarmament Conference. In the meantime, however, certain regulations "civilizing" commercial aviation were to be applied. The British Government had taken the stand, throughout the Conference, that only effective supervision of civil aviation could justify the abolition of military and naval aircraft and this position was generally accepted. As there was as yet no proposal for supervision which had met with general assent, the British Government provided for the continued study of the problem while submitting certain reductions of air armaments to take place immediately.

In order to facilitate an eventual abolition or serious reduction, the High Contracting Parties were to reduce the number of aeroplanes, capable of use in war, in commission in their land, sea, and air armed forces, to the figures contained in an annexed table. Each Party might keep a reserve of 25 per cent of the number allowed. In the table the One-Power Standard was applied among the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Japan, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the United States of America with 500 machines each. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Spain were allowed 200 machines; Belgium, the Netherlands, and Rumania, 150 machines; China and Turkey, 100; Greece, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland, 75; Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, 50; Finland and Portugal, 25. The other countries would maintain the *status quo* existing on January 1, 1933. Aeroplanes might not exceed three tons unladen

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weight except troop carriers and flying boats, particulars on which had to be furnished yearly to the Permanent Disarmament Commission. No dirigibles might be built or acquired or replaced during the period of the present Convention. Excess aeroplanes had to be disposed of before June 30, 1936. The same provision applied to aeroplanes over the maximum unladen weight.

After a general discussion on the whole British Draft Convention, the General Commission accepted it as a basis for discussion on March 27, 1933. Resuming its session on April 25th the General Commission undertook the first reading of the Draft Convention article by article. On May 27th and 28th the problems of air armaments were broached in a general discussion. It became evident during this discussion that there was general agreement on the desirability of abolishing military and naval aviation. This, however, was conditioned upon finding a successful method of supervising civil aviation. Some delegations favoured the complete internationalization of civil aviation, others effective international supervision and control, and yet others brought up again the creation of an international police force. The General Commission decided not to discuss the provisions of the Draft Convention point by point, but rather to adjourn the discussion until the second reading at which time the Commission might be in possession of the report of the sub-committee on the internationalization of aviation. The British text was, therefore, considered to have been read once and discussion on individual amendments was postponed till the second reading. On June 8th the General Commission adopted the Draft Convention as the basis of the future convention and adjourned the second reading until October 16, 1933.

Conversations among the large Powers were held in September and October 1933 in an attempt to harmonize their views before entering on the second reading of the Draft Convention. On October 14th Germany withdrew once more from the Conference and, as a result, private negotiations were resorted to and the General Commission was not reconvened until May 1934. During this time disarmament formed the subject of many important

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debates in the House of Commons. In the debates of November 7 and 13, 1933, many speakers advocated the abolition of all bombing, and of military and naval aircraft, and the international control of civil aviation. There was a definite movement, however, for building up to the One-Power Standard if these limitations were not achieved. Unilateral disarmament had proceeded far enough. On November 29, 1933, a motion was introduced which expressed disquiet at the inadequacy of air defences and supported the claim for the One-Power Standard and the Government's policy for parity in air armaments. In accepting the motion Mr. Baldwin made it clear that Great Britain had gone as far as she would along the lines of unilateral reduction of armaments.

"It is equally clear that we cannot stand alone in the world in our present position with regard to defence, whether in the air, or at sea, or on the land, and I think that should be made perfectly clear both in this country and abroad."¹

On the same day the Secretary of State for Air, Lord Londonderry, made a similar statement in the House of Lords.

"It is therefore a path which can obviously no longer be followed, and we must, however reluctantly, abandon the policy of unilateral disarmament which in the present unfortunate state of international affairs it is manifestly not only useless, but even dangerous for us to pursue further. . . .

"... Therefore, when I say that we can no longer provide an example by unilateral disarmament, your Lordships will understand that I do not mean, in any way, that we must adopt some new principle to guide us in the matter of our air armament. His Majesty's Government have made it plain in their successive pronouncements at Geneva that they recognize the need for a One-Power Standard in the air for this country."²

He went on to show that the air disarmament policy of the British Government in the Disarmament Conference had been dictated by the need of increasing British relative air strength.

"Our present relative weakness in the air cannot be allowed to continue; the whole policy pursued by His Majesty's Government in the

¹ 283 *H.C. Debts.*, 5 s., col. 1013.

² 90 *H. of L. Debts.*, 5 s., col. 183.

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matter of air disarmament is proof of their full acceptance of this proposition. We must all hope that it will be possible to fix a first-line strength for the principal Air Powers which will neither be a threat to the peace of the world nor impose an intolerable financial burden. These islands and the Empire as a whole must be made safe in the air, but a race in air armaments must at all cost be avoided.”¹

During the negotiations to secure Germany's return to Geneva, the conviction grew in England that the Disarmament Conference would adopt no immediate drastic solution and that, in the meantime, the insecurity of the island was rapidly increasing with the growth of air armaments abroad. This was particularly true as the demands of Germany for equality of rights now included immediate aerial rearmament. In the private conversations in Geneva in October 1933 the British Government had refused to allow Germany “prototypes” during the transitional period, because it would have involved military aviation. This refusal had precluded all possibility of agreement, for France might, at that time, have agreed to granting Germany “prototypes” if the British Government had strongly supported such a course. In its memorandum of January 29, 1934, the British Government had likewise refused immediate air rearmament to Germany. If, after two years, the Permanent Disarmament Commission had not decided on abolition of military aviation, the British Government would recognize the right of all nations to it and provide for reaching parity by stages. In the course of ensuing negotiations, Germany insisted on military aviation and the other Powers would not accept immediate reduction to the figures in the British Disarmament Convention. As a result the memorandum of the Secretary of State for Air of 1934 made it clear that, although British air policy had been to achieve a One-Power Standard by the disarmament of other countries to the British Standard, the Government was now “under the necessity of making it equally plain that they cannot, in the interests of our national and Imperial security, accept a position of continuing inferiority in the air.”²

On February 20, 1934, the first-line air strength of Great

¹ 90 *H. of L. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 185.

² Cmd. 4521 of 1934, p. 4.

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Britain was 850 machines as compared with 1,650 in France and 1,300 to 1,500 in Russia.¹ In view of this situation the Air Estimates provided for an effective increase of six squadrons in Britain's first-line strength. Sir Philip Sassoon explained the increase, on March 8, 1934, by the fact that while Great Britain had reduced her air armaments other countries were increasing theirs.

"In these circumstances, His Majesty's Government feel that it is no longer possible to postpone further the 10-year-old programme of 1923, which is already so long overdue for completion. They feel that we cannot any longer accept a position of continuing inferiority in the air. We have made it plain that this country must, so long as air forces exist, have parity in the air, howsoever that parity may be attained. This does not mean that we have in any way abandoned our belief in the advantage of general air disarmament. We have recently submitted to the principal European Air Powers a Disarmament Memorandum which would have to effect of stabilizing the leading air forces of the world on a parity basis at a figure which would entail considerable reductions in all the leading air forces, including our own. We stand by that memorandum. We shall continue to use all the arguments and all the influence that we can command to persuade other nations to adopt it, or some other scheme framed on similar lines. But the time has come when we can no longer ignore the fact that, whereas all nations talk about disarmament, hardly any other nations except ourselves are doing anything but increasing their air armaments. Therefore, if other nations will not come to our level, our national and Imperial security demands that we shall build up towards theirs."²

The policy of the British Government had become quite clear. In 1922 Mr. Lloyd George, as Prime Minister, had foreseen a large increase in Home Defence Air Force to reach parity with the French. During the following year Mr. Baldwin's Government, on the recommendation of the Committee of Imperial Defence, laid down the One-Power Standard to apply to the largest air force within striking distance. For three years, until the signing of the Treaties of Locarno, the British Government carried out the air expansion scheme laid down by Mr. Baldwin. During this time, however, the Government demonstrated repeatedly that it would favour any equitable arrangement for the

¹ 286 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 188.

² *Ibid.*, cols. 2029-2030.

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limitation of air armaments. After Locarno, in view of the spirit of conciliation which the Treaties induced and the hope for a future Disarmament Convention, the British Government slowed down its Home Defence Air Force expansion programme. In the Preparatory Commission the British rallied to any proposal meeting with general assent. They followed the same policy in the General Disarmament Conference. They advocated the complete abolition of military and naval air forces, providing a satisfactory international supervision of civil aviation could be devised. They showed their willingness to go to any length in reduction of air forces providing other nations did the same. While presenting plans for immediate accord on the basis of the One-Power Standard they pressed for the study of more far-reaching schemes. During this time, in the spirit of the Armaments Truce, they maintained their Air Force at the strength existing in November 1931, although the feeling of insecurity from the air became more and more manifest. Finally, losing hope that the Disarmament Conference would achieve far-reaching results, the British Government suggested an agreement on the figures for aeroplanes proposed in the British Draft Convention.

Having laid down the principle that parity with the strongest air force within striking distance was absolutely necessary for the defence of the British Isles, the British Government, after a first attempt to achieve this parity through competitive building, relied on disarmament to bring about the One-Power Standard. It co-operated in any movement for the reduction of air armaments which would leave Britain on a basis of equality with the strongest air force within striking distance. In view of the increasing development of first-line air strengths abroad and of the failure of the Disarmament Conference to reach positive results the British Government indicated that it might have to reach parity through building. In the debates on the Air Estimates on March 8, 1934, Mr. Baldwin faced the result of the failure of the Disarmament Convention.

“Suppose the convention fails; I would not then relax for a moment, nor would the Government relax the efforts, if a convention on our

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lines failed, to start work the next morning to get an air convention alone among the countries of Western Europe, even if we could not get in some that are far away, for the saving of our own European civilization. . . .

"In conclusion, I say that if all our efforts fail, and if it is not possible to obtain this equality in such matters as I have indicated, then any Government of this country—a National Government more than any, and this Government—will see to it that in air strength and air power this country shall no longer be in a position inferior to any country within striking distance of our shores."¹

After the French note of April 17th the British Government abandoned hope of composing the Franco-German disagreement and accomplishing results at the Disarmament Conference. The failure to agree upon an immediate programme of disarmament at the meeting of the General Commission of May-June 1934, and the potential gravity of the situation in Germany, led the Government, in June 1934, to ask the Air Ministry to submit a plan for the immediate increase of the Home Defence Air Force to bring it up to the One-Power Standard. The agitation against unilateral disarmament, which began to make itself felt in 1930, had increased during the Disarmament Conference. The Government had become determined to provide adequately for the defence of the Empire. In a declaration to the House of Commons, on July 13, 1934, Sir John Simon stated that the Government could not await positive or negative results of the Disarmament Conference before seeing to the defence of the country. On July 19, 1934, the Government announced a far-reaching air development scheme calling for some 460 aeroplanes to be added to the Home Defence Air Force during the next five years. Defending this policy on July 30, 1934, Mr. Baldwin said that this first step towards equality in air strength was necessary to safeguard Britain and place her in position to fulfil her international commitments.

"The proposals I announced on July 19th are a step, and a considerable step, towards parity, and I shall try to show that they are as far as I think it is practicable and wise to go within that limit of time.

¹ 286 *H.C. Debs.*, cols. 2077-2078.

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They do not bring us up to full parity, but without this increase which we are proposing we shall certainly not be capable of effective co-operation in any system of collective security under the League of Nations.”¹

The British Government had now definitely abandoned its policy adopted in 1926 of attaining the One-Power Standard by the disarmament of others to the British level, and had once again decided to build up to parity with the strongest air force within striking distance. Because other nations had not followed British “example,” and because unilateral disarmament had failed as a diplomatic weapon, British unilateral disarmament had come to an end.

¹ 292 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., cols. 1278–1279.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

THE period of European history from the Franco-Prussian War to the World War has been called the era of armed peace. In the scramble for colonies, for commercial concessions, for financial advantages, armaments played an important role: prestige and diplomatic strength of nations were measured in terms of cubic feet of armour. Competition in armaments accompanied competition in "national interests" and "national prestige." The burden of armaments was fast becoming unbearable when war broke out and all the resources of the nations were devoted to feeding the military machines. Armies, navies, and air forces, by reckless consumption of national wealth, grew to undreamed-of proportions. When war was over, the reaction against these all-consuming monsters was universal and peoples looked away from war to a state of peace where armaments would have ceased to exist. Other events arising out of the war strengthened the desire for peace, and for disarmament as the corner-stone of a peace policy. Under the compelling influence of these forces the British Government proceeded along the path of disarmament so long as this path ran parallel to that of its traditional foreign policy. Where these paths diverged, the British Government elected to follow the known road to security in preference to the theoretical utopia of world brotherhood.

The Navy had grown to large proportions during the war and the first task of the Admiralty, after the Armistice, was the reduction of naval forces to a peace footing. At the time of the Armistice the British Navy was composed of 1,887 ships with a total tonnage of 3,136,000 tons and 1,005 more ships were ordered or under construction. Of these, 611 were cancelled and the rest completed. Of the other 1,887, up to March 1928, 1,538 ships were scrapped exclusive of trawlers and drifters with a total tonnage of 2,139,515 tons. New construction for that period

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was only 56 ships with an aggregate tonnage of 332,515 tons. Necessary replacements of over-aged vessels were not made because of the desire of the Government to avoid any action which might revive naval building competition and because of the undertakings which it had entered into to avert this danger.

No sooner had the German Navy been defeated than British naval supremacy was challenged from another quarter. The United States had begun building a large navy in 1916 which she intended to make at least equal to the British Navy. Although American naval growth had never been viewed with anxiety by the Admiralty, this new development was disquieting. This was particularly so as the American diplomats at the Peace Conference threatened building competition with Great Britain in order to secure British support of their programme. Satisfied by private conversations that the American Government did not desire a naval competition, the British Government examined the position of the Navy and decided to maintain it on a "One-Power Standard" *vis-à-vis* the American Navy. Great Britain had stopped all building of capital ships after the war, but American-Japanese naval competition was forcing her to abandon this policy when, through the determination of the British Government and the initiative of the United States, the Washington Conference was called to consider the problem of limitation of armaments and Far Eastern questions.

This Conference proved opportune from the point of view of British diplomacy. The original term of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had expired and the question of its continuance raised delicate problems in British relations with the United States, Japan, and China. The Washington Conference provided the solution to this difficult diplomatic tangle. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance was replaced by a Four-Power Treaty of general and mutual "respect" of territorial possessions in the Pacific. This Treaty was part of a general equilibrium of power in the Pacific created by an agreement to limit naval armaments according to a definite ratio, another to maintain the *status quo* in naval fortifications within a strictly defined zone, and another providing

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for guarantee of China and consultation in the event of difficulties arising. The limitation of armaments, which formed an indispensable part of this political settlement, concerned only capital ships and aircraft carriers. The tonnage of capital ships and aircraft carriers of Great Britain, the United States, and Japan—France and Italy were joined in this settlement to enable Great Britain to participate—was reduced to given figures on the basis of the *status quo* in effective naval strength which resulted in a ratio of 5-5-3 for the United States, Great Britain, and Japan. The British Government accepted parity with the United States in battle strength but made a reservation as to cruiser strength. No agreement on auxiliary vessels was reached, however, because France would not agree to such limitation without its being made part of a political settlement of European questions. The strictly regional aspect of the political settlement of the Washington Conference did not afford sufficiently broad basis for the limitation of all French and Italian armaments and this precluded any agreement by Great Britain on auxiliary craft.

The efforts of the British Government after the Washington Conference were concerned with the extension of the naval agreements to the unlimited classes of vessels. These met with two difficulties. On the one hand there was a divergence in the interests of Great Britain and the United States. The United States, with few naval bases, was interested in big ships capable of long-distance operations without refuelling. Great Britain, with an abundance of naval bases along her trade routes, was more interested in numbers of ships than in size and preferred to distribute a given tonnage in smaller ships. On the other hand there was difficulty in limiting British auxiliary vessels so long as France and Italy remained free to build any tonnage they pleased. Limitation of French and Italian auxiliary vessels was possible only in a General Disarmament Convention and as a part of the establishment of a political equilibrium in Europe. Eight years of negotiations permitted the temporary settlement of the first issue but all efforts to meet the second difficulty have so far proved fruitless.

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The British Government accepted parity with the United States in battle strength by the Treaty of Washington, but it felt that the special position of Britain and her utter dependence upon overseas communications required a larger number of commerce-protecting vessels. The American delegation at the Geneva Naval Conference of 1927 insisted on mathematical parity in all classes of ships. The British Government was ready to admit this claim but it maintained its demand for a large number of commerce-protecting vessels. Unable to accept the large tonnage of cruisers involved, the Americans proposed a tonnage limitation which would enable them to build the larger ships they wanted and the British to build at the expense of size the number of ships they needed. Agreement could not be reached on this compromise because the British Government was calculating parity in terms of the offensive strength of both navies and therefore could not allow the United States to have more "offensive cruisers" than it had. The signing of the Kellogg Pact and the *détente* in Anglo-American relations which it produced permitted the establishment through diplomatic negotiations of a "yardstick" for measuring large cruisers against small ones—one 8-inch gun cruiser was considered the equivalent of two 6-inch gun cruisers. On the basis of this compromise the British Government abandoned the number of cruisers at which it had placed its need and accepted limitation on the basis of the *status quo*. The difficulties which had prevented agreement at the Geneva Conference were overcome and the limitation of the auxiliary vessels of the United States, Great Britain, and Japan was now possible.

Only the difficulty of limiting French and Italian naval armaments now stood in the way of a complete limitation of all the naval armaments of Great Britain, the United States, and Japan. France emerged from the war the strongest military power in Europe, and, by the size of her armaments, continued to hold that rank. Her naval armaments, however, were smaller than those of Great Britain, the United States, or Japan. She was therefore unwilling to enter into a purely naval disarmament agreement where her status would not be in keeping with her general position

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in world politics and where she would be forced to make concessions without being able to exact counterparts in military or air armaments where her interests were greater. This made almost impossible a strictly naval disarmament convention with France as a Party, and Italian policy depended upon French action. Moreover, both France and Italy were unwilling to forgo the diplomatic pressure of their naval armaments in maintaining or adjusting the equilibrium of peace before they had achieved a settlement satisfactory to themselves and were guaranteed its maintenance. A new political settlement of European affairs with at least Great Britain, France, and Italy as parties was therefore necessary to bring France and Italy into any disarmament convention.

The difficulty of including France and Italy in a disarmament convention limiting naval armaments separately from other armaments was further complicated by a difference of opinion as to the proper method of limiting these armaments. France and Italy advocated total (global) tonnage limitation while Great Britain favoured the method of limitation by categories already applied at Versailles and at Washington. This difference of opinion persisted throughout the first six sessions of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference. The British Government and the French Government offered concessions to each other; all but one were rejected and that one was not acceptable to the United States and Italy. The divergence between the two views, however, had been considerably decreased in the course of these negotiations. Agreement by further conversations was in sight when the solution of the Anglo-American cruiser difficulty enabled the British Government to convene another Five-Power Naval Conference in London at the beginning of 1930.

At the London Naval Conference, the political settlement of Washington was completed by the limitation of the auxiliary vessels of the British, American, and Japanese Fleets. The disagreement between Great Britain and the United States on cruisers, which had prevented full accord at Geneva three years earlier, was satisfactorily solved, although the opposition of

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interests persisted, America requiring few large ships and Great Britain numerous small ones. Certain modifications in the 5-5-3 ratio were made with regard to Japan to ensure her acceptance of the Anglo-American transaction and to bring limitations more into line with the *status quo*. France and Italy would not enter into the quantitative limitation agreement because the political basis they required was not provided. They agreed, however, upon a method of limiting naval armaments which introduced the flexibility of global tonnage limitation into the system of limitation by categories. They also agreed to prolong the battleship building holiday on ships due to be laid down after 1930 and to a qualitative limitation on submarines. The freedom of French and Italian naval armaments from limitation seriously threatened the agreement between Great Britain, the United States, and Japan because of the necessity for Great Britain to maintain the Two-Power Standard in Europe to ensure her security and protect her essential lines of communication. To make the Three-Power Naval Agreement possible an "Escalator Clause" was introduced in the Treaty which permitted any one of the Parties to free itself from the imposed limitations if new construction by Powers not Parties rendered the continuance of these limitations dangerous to its security. Thus if French and Italian naval armaments continued to grow, Great Britain could, after notifying the United States and Japan, free herself from the quantitative limitations imposed in Part III of the London Naval Treaty.

The precarious situation of the London naval limitations impelled the British Government to do its utmost to induce France and Italy to agree to quantitative limitations on their naval armaments. After the failure of the Franco-Italian Agreement of 1931 conversations were postponed until the opening of the World Disarmament Conference. There further conversations were held without success. No political equilibrium had as yet been contemplated of which the naval limitations of France and Italy could form a part. Further British naval disarmament was out of question until France and Italy should join Part III

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of the London Naval Treaty. The disruption of the political equilibrium in the Pacific by Japanese action in Manchuria, the opposition of American and British interests in size and number of ships which reappeared in the Disarmament Conference, the practical impossibility of agreement on naval armaments between France and Italy, and the difficulties inherent in the German demand for equality of rights in armaments raised such problems to be solved before further naval disarmament could proceed that no agreement on the subject was possible in the World Disarmament Conference.

British naval policy, because of the financial difficulties of post-war Britain and the strong popular movement for disarmament, was concerned primarily in avoiding naval building competition while maintaining the British Navy in predominant position. Limitation of armaments was the only means to accomplish this end. At Washington, Geneva, and London a political equilibrium was set up and completed which permitted the limitation of the naval armaments of Great Britain, the United States, and Japan on the basis of the *status quo* in effective naval strength. This was perfectly acceptable to the British Government because it maintained unimpaired essential British interests in sea-power. This limitation on naval competition was seriously threatened by the naval building of European Continental Powers. In order that this building might not challenge her effective supremacy in European waters, Great Britain sought the limitation of the naval armaments of the next two strongest European naval Powers, France and Italy. The failure to achieve this disarmament and the continued growth of naval armaments on the Continent may force Great Britain to increase her own, and thus may place in jeopardy the equilibrium in Anglo-American armaments; Japan has already destroyed the equilibrium in Anglo-American-Japanese armaments.

The British Army had grown to extremely large proportions during the war. From a small voluntary force, to police and garrison the Empire, it had developed into a large conscript army of 8,500,000 men to oppose the strongest military machine the

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world had yet seen. The task of reduction to a peace footing was quickly performed after the Armistice. By 1920 the Army was reorganized on the pre-war basis with 299,774 men of all ranks. By 1934 the numbers had decreased to 149,500 all ranks. With its Army already reduced in size so as to be barely capable of fulfilling its Imperial functions, the British Government strongly advocated the reduction of land armaments of all countries in order to decrease the "aggressive power" or striking force of all nations. This reduction of armaments would in effect increase the relative importance of the British Army while, at the same time, making more stable the existing equilibrium of peace. At first insistent upon methods of limitation of land armaments which best suited its strategic needs, the British Government, in exchange for concessions on naval armaments and in order to procure some measure at least of land disarmament, soon left to the Continental Powers the task of deciding upon the modalities of land disarmament and it agreed to the propositions which met with general assent.

While the role played by Great Britain in the actual limitation of land armaments was passive, her role in striking the political equilibrium on which such limitation could be based was far from passive. Using the limitation of land armaments as a means of ensuring the maintenance of peace and upholding the balance of power in Europe, the British Government endeavoured to bring the European Powers together in a political settlement which would establish a balance of "interests" satisfactory to each and of which the limitation of land armaments would be a *conditio sine qua non*. The negotiations in the World Disarmament Conference and the parallel diplomatic conversations have so far shown the practical impossibility of reconciling the German demand for equality of status with the French conception of security. Europe is still divided among satisfied and dissatisfied Powers and the latter have not given up the possibility of recourse to force to obtain a more satisfactory peace. Under these circumstances Great Britain could do no more than her traditional policy called for: while seeking to harmonize the divergent

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interests of European Powers and lessen the gap between them, to hold herself aloof from combinations on the Continent until her weight on one side or the other becomes necessary to maintain peace or to safeguard the possession of the Low Countries in friendly hands.

From the embryonic stage the Royal Air Force developed so rapidly under the stimulation of war needs as to rank first among the world's Air Forces at the signing of the Armistice. Under the retrenchment programme this Force was cut from 293,512 men of all ranks and 22,171 aircraft of all types at the Armistice to 20,654 men of all ranks and 180 first-line planes in December 1922. The air policy of the British Government was not fixed until 1923. In June 1923 Mr. Baldwin laid down the One-Power Standard for the Royal Air Force—that the Home Defence Air Force should not be inferior in strength to the strongest air force within striking distance. Under this policy, an immediate expansion programme was undertaken to be completed by 1929 or 1930. The Government was loath to start building up air armaments if this could be avoided by limitation. Therefore, after the *détente* of Locarno, in 1926, it eased up on its air building programme and renewed its efforts for a disarmament convention. It was prepared to accept any reasonable and effective limitation of air armaments. Conscious of the threat of the air to Great Britain, the Government even advocated the complete abolition of military and naval air forces provided an effective system of control of civil aviation could be found. The limitation of air armaments, however, was closely related to the limitation of land armaments and the political equilibrium which would make the one possible would also realize the other. In the absence of this settlement, international limitation of air armaments could not be achieved. Unable to effect the One-Power Standard through disarmament the British Government, in view of the unfavourable international situation and the growing feeling of insecurity at home, decided it must regain parity in first-line air strength by a return to competitive building.

After the war Great Britain embarked upon unilateral reduction

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in all armaments—naval, land, and air. Until the stimuli of financial necessities and the popular movement for disarmament, unilateral disarmament was carried to the utmost limit compatible with British security. This disarmament, however, had serious repercussions on the conduct of British foreign relations. The weight of Great Britain in diplomatic bargaining is, in the last resort, proportionate to the strength of her armaments and her influence for peace is measurable in terms of the force she can muster to prevent the overthrow of the political equilibrium by armed force. Unilateral disarmament by effecting a relative change in the armed power of Great Britain *vis-à-vis* the other nations affected adversely British diplomatic strength, and British prestige in European affairs was lessened. Scepticism of the effectiveness of the Locarno Agreement expressed in French circles does not originate in fear that Great Britain will not keep her word but in the realization that she has nothing to keep it with.

In a statement to the House of Commons defending the increase in air strength proposed by the Government, Mr. Baldwin, Lord President of the Council, on July 30, 1934, showed a clear grasp of the consequences of British unilateral disarmament. Speaking of international engagements, he said

“ . . . and for myself I am very nervous of accepting obligations if I have not the means in my hands to carry those obligations out. Unless those means are provided, our contribution to collective security is not only meaningless, but it will be regarded by foreign nations as meaningless too. And I must confess that I have heard in the whispering gallery of Europe that our defences to-day are so small as to offer but little contribution to collective security. The contribution which any nation can make to collective security is not absolute but relative. If other nations, whether for good reasons or bad, do, as a fact, increase their armaments then, if our contribution to collective security as a deterrent is to be of any value, we must to some extent increase our own strength.”¹

Referring expressly to the Treaties of Locarno, he maintained that

“Without the additions now proposed to our air defence we should be unable a few years hence, when the foreign programme of which

¹ 292 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 2332.

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I have spoken have all been completed, to carry out in such a world as would then exist the Locarno commitment.”¹

In bargaining for international reductions of armaments, unilateral disarmament placed Great Britain in a bad tactical position, for she had nothing to offer or to bargain with. Other nations were not following British example and British foreign policy had lost some of its weight in European diplomacy. This was emphasized by the negotiations of the Disarmament Conference. In the same statement Mr. Baldwin pointed to the weakness of British diplomacy in the Disarmament Conference caused by her unilateral disarmament.

“It is even possible that had our own scale of armaments been higher we should have been better able to influence the course of the Disarmament Conference. Our representatives at Geneva have not always had an easy task in making proposals which involved much greater concessions from the more heavily armed nations, and they have got tired of hearing us discanting on our own virtue in not having increased our armaments. On the other hand, if the other nations find that we are no longer content to remain comparatively disarmed in this respect when they are all armed, and that increasing expenditure on their part may be met in like manner by ourselves, that in itself is no mean weapon to use in inclining them to discuss more seriously than some of them have yet done the question of aerial disarmament.”²

In the same debate Sir John Simon said that he was convinced that British unilateral disarmament had not rendered easier the task of securing international disarmament.

“No doubt our record of unilateral disarmament in advance of corresponding action by other Powers had given us a strong moral position, but after all a sense of rectitude is not always the best attitude for persuading others to repent. . . . [Other nations] may hint that our reasons for reduction were not entirely disinterested, that we followed that policy for financial or other reasons. Moreover, with one-sided disarmament, in any future agreement for reduction we have less to give. I remember that Lewis Carroll in one of his poems described a curious creature that he called the Snark, having the unhappy quality

¹ 292 *H.C. Debs.*, 5 s., col. 2336.

² *Ibid.*, cols. 2336-2337.

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‘At charity concerts where he stands at the door,
‘And collects, but does not subscribe.’

It is extremely difficult to carry through successful negotiation of an international agreement for limitation and reduction of armaments if, as a matter of fact, with the best will in the world, you have carried through your own disarmament in advance to such a point that you cannot make a contribution to it.”¹

If unilateral disarmament has proved a source of weakness to British diplomacy and, in the degree to which this diplomacy aims at maintaining peace, has proved injurious to the cause of peace, the same cannot be said of international disarmament. International disarmament can only take place within a complex political arrangement setting up an equilibrium of interest acceptable to the various Powers participating. This equilibrium is all the more stable because the armed forces which might be used to upset it are delicately balanced against each other to prevent such use. Peace, then, is more assured when there exists an international convention crystallizing the *status quo* in armed diplomatic power. Since peace is the corner-stone of British foreign policy, international disarmament is an important means of furthering British policy and of safeguarding its basic principles, the maintenance of an effective naval supremacy, the denying of access to the Low Countries to any strong military or naval Power and the preservation of a balance of power in Europe.

In the field of naval affairs international disarmament has already proved an important diplomatic means of forwarding traditional British policy. At a time when relations between Great Britain, the United States, Japan, and China were strained, and British interests in each appeared to be in irreconcilable conflict, the limitation of naval armaments served as the axis of a diplomatic settlement which satisfied all the requirements of British foreign policy. The particular interests of each Power were preserved, and the general interest of all was furthered by the reduction of naval building competition. The political settlement maintained friendly relations with Japan which a British denun-

¹ 292 *H.C. Debs.*, cols. 2442-2443.

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ciation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance might have jeopardized. It safeguarded British interests in China and, above all, it ensured friendly relations with the United States. This was achieved at the cost of recognizing in a Treaty the principle of parity in naval strength with the United States which the British Government had already conceded and which in no way hampered the effectiveness of the British Navy in fulfilling its functions. The political settlement also involved temporary postponement of necessary cruiser building but only so long as the naval developments of other European Powers were not threatening to British security. Thus, besides promoting most important British interests in China, Japan, and the United States, international limitation of naval armaments has preserved intact the first basis of British foreign policy—the possession of an effective naval force superior to any force which may oppose it in its own waters or attack its essential lines of communication.

International limitation of all armaments, which was a part of the disarmament programme of the British Government and which was attempted in Geneva, would also have proved of great value in promoting essential principles of British foreign policy had it been successful. Because naval armaments were the only armaments influencing the diplomatic bargainings of Great Britain with the United States and Japan and *vice versa*, a balance of power could be struck among them by the sole limitation of naval armaments. This was not true in the case of the European Powers. All armaments—land, naval, and air—influenced their diplomatic bargaining power, although the preponderant influence lay with land armaments. A general limitation of all armaments was therefore necessary to stabilize the political equilibrium in Europe. This equilibrium, with a general limitation of all armaments as an indispensable condition thereof, would have proved the best safeguard to British vital interests. Naval supremacy would have been maintained by the limitation of all navies and the elimination of building competition. The Low Countries would have been preserved in friendly hands because the political equilibrium would have ensured the security of each nation

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against external aggression. The equilibrium would also have balanced forces on the Continent in such a way that no nation would have become preponderant and, hence, threatening to the Low Countries and to the security of England. Because disarmament was made an immediate and pressing issue, however, the political equilibrium resulting from the war had to be revised before time and the interplay of forces had dulled the acerbity of the conflict of "interests" between European Powers. This gave rise to such strong reactions that international disarmament had to be postponed until the nations should arrive at a state of relative diplomatic bargaining power which could not be appreciably changed by armaments competition. The attempt at immediate international disarmament had defeated its own ends.

All successful treaties limiting armaments have been based on the *status quo* of diplomatic strength and those which have attempted a change in the *status quo* have resulted in failure. The general limitation of all armaments after the war has not succeeded because the *status quo* in armaments was not acceptable to all countries involved. The existing peace did not satisfy all Powers, some of whom, in order to force a readjustment, would not abandon the diplomatic pressure of armaments competition and the possibility of thereby increasing their relative diplomatic strength. Germany and, to a lesser extent, Italy were unwilling to abandon the possibility of changing the political equilibrium by armaments competition unless their "interests" were previously satisfied. France, on the other hand, was not ready to agree to any change in the existing relative level of armaments without guarantees of security, *i.e.* guarantees that she could maintain her relative position with her decreased armaments.¹ These

¹ Germany adopted a similar attitude in 1870 and British reaction was the same as in post-war years. Lord Clarendon, writing to Lord Augustus Loftus, on March 9, 1870, said:

"The question often to my mind appears quite simple. The military forces of the great Continental Powers have a certain proportion to each other; in order to maintain that proportion, very heavy burdens are imposed upon each country, but if by common agreement, each reduces its army by a certain number of men, the same proportion will be maintained, while the burdens, which are fast becoming intolerable, will be alleviated."

"Count Bismarck however thinks that if the question of diminishing the

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guarantees the British Government would not give except in the general non-committal form provided in the Covenant and the more limited form of Locarno. Under these conditions international disarmament ceased to be the stabilization of relative bargaining power on the basis of the *status quo* to ensure the maintenance of the political settlement against change by armed force.

The failure of the Disarmament Conference and the parallel negotiations demonstrate the practical impossibility of satisfying all Powers at the same time within any given political system. A successful solution can be found only in the recognition that the use of armed force is no longer an effective means of continuing policy and in the substitution therefor of non-belligere means. As General Bliss remarked, "the fact remains that disarmament will proceed only as peaceful methods of settling disputes are substituted for war."¹ This idea was at the basis of the League of Nations. A political equilibrium was struck and disarmament was made an essential part of it. The Covenant was to provide for the peaceful settlement of disputes and the peaceful means of changing the equilibrium. In the course of negotiations at Paris, general disarmament was postponed and stress was laid on the "equilibrium maintaining" activities of the League of Nations at the expense of the peaceful "equilibrium changing" activities. General limitation of all armaments in Europe will be possible only as a *conditio sine qua non* of a political equilibrium in which the nations recognize that the only effective means of continuing policy and promoting "national interests" is through the free interplay of international forces within a peaceful world ruled by law. Such an equilibrium would be forever in process

military strength of Prussia is entertained, it will be necessary carefully to enquire what guarantees can be given by neighbouring military Powers in compensation to Germany for a decrease in the amount of security which she has hitherto owed to her armies.

"Upon this I would respectfully beg to observe that a minute discussion of guarantees would be endless and dangerous" (Lord Newton, *Lord Lyons*, I, pp. 267-270).

¹ Bliss, Tasker H., "What is Disarmament?" *Foreign Affairs* (N.Y.), 4, p. 367.

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of adjustment to existing circumstances but always by peaceful means.

This "international *laissez-faire*" within a realm of law has been the aim of British foreign policy because it protects vital British interests for the promotion of which war has ceased to be an effective means. Moreover, British prosperity and even her existence are dependent upon the continuance of peace. Therefore international disarmament, as an indispensable condition of a system of "international *laissez-faire*" within a realm of law, promotes the vital interests of Great Britain. Unilateral disarmament, by weakening the relative strength of British diplomatic bargaining power, decreases the ability of British foreign policy to keep peace and safeguard essential British interests. It does not take away from armaments their intrinsic value as diplomatic weapons. International disarmament, on the other hand, by crystallizing the *status quo* in diplomatic power, and thereby enhancing the value of non-bellicose methods of diplomatic pressure, may prove a more effective means of promoting the essential principles of British foreign policy than armaments have been. This, however, would require a world wherein the use of armed force as a diplomatic weapon has been abandoned, a condition which does not exist to-day.

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¹ Abbreviations:

J.B.I.I.A.—*Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs*.

J.R.I.I.A.—*Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*.

J.R.U.S.I.—*Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*.

Brassey's—*Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*.

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